The

Qur'an

made simple

with concise commentary

تقريب القرآن إلى الأذهان

by

Imam Muhammad Shirazi

Parts 28-30
Volume 10

Translated by

Salman Tawhidi

fountain books
BM Box 8545
London WC1N 3XX
UK
www.fountainbooks.com

In association with
Imam Shirazi World Foundation
1220 L. Street N.W. Suite # 100 – 333
Washington, D.C. 20005 – 4018, U.S.A.
www.ImamShirazi.com

First English edition, 2004

ISBN 1-903323-29-0

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Contents

Table of Surahs or Chapters of the Final Three Parts of the Holy Qur'an

Translator's Foreword

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Master of the worlds, and peace and blessings be with His messenger Muhammad, and with his noble, purified house.

The Noble Qur'an is the greatest of the books of God. It is the most outstanding book ever to appear on the face of the earth. It is not merely a compilation of chronicles of an ancient people, nor yet of a group of Prophets, or even of all Prophets. Nor is it solely a book of morals. It is certainly not just a book of science, and it is not simply a book of rules and laws. Rather, it is a set of arguments in the Divine tongue setting out exactly why the reader, or listener, should recognise Allah, glorified be He, submit to Him, glorified be He, and follow the Divine religion. These arguments are both rational, addressed to the mind, and spiritual, addressed to the heart. In the Divine words the Noble Qur'an is a book 'of guidance', guiding man from darkness to light, from evil to good, from ignorance to knowledge, from uncertainty about the origin and the end, and about man's role in the world, to certainty and conviction.

The noble Qur'an was brought down from the highest level of heaven by the angel Jabra'il (Gabriel) who presented himself to the eye of the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his purified house,* and presented the Qur'an to his blessed ear, at precisely that moment in history when mankind had reached the point of being sufficiently mature to appreciate it and be guided by it. So it was that towards the conclusion of his holy mission, the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his purified house,* stated clearly for his companions to hear, heed and record, these words:

"I leave behind me two weighty things - if you grasp the two of them you will not go astray. The Qur'an and my household (*Ahl-ul-Bayt*)."

Yes, for protected themselves, these are the two guardians of the religion of Islam, protecting the truth and its most lofty and subtle points from obliteration and annihilation throughout the lengthy 'age of reason' that is the final stage of man's life on earth.

The Prophet's household are headed by that most illustrious of the Prophet's followers Ali, *peace be with him,* and his most noble wife Fatimah, *peace be with her* – who was also the Prophet's beloved daughter born to him during his mission – through their sons the Prophet's only grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, *peace be with them,* and the nine Imams after Husayn, *peace be with them all.* In one way or another, all of these members of the Prophet's purified house

played their part in protecting the sacred fabric of Islam, and did so with such constancy and dedication that they were each known as being ‘like the Qur’an walking’. Here is not the place to recount their achievements, but the books of history, of ethics, of law, and of every branch of learning from grammar to medicine all bear witness to their invaluable services to the religion and culture of Islam, while their sacrifices in doing so constitute the finest examples of honour and constancy the world has ever seen. Who can argue, then, that they were not protected from deviation and sin?

In the same way, the noble Qur’an is protected from error, and is the solid heart of the religion that never fails. Unlike any other book it has remained unchanged, unaltered, free of any additions or deletions, from the very outset. It is the testament and message to mankind from its Master, the One God, who is well able to protect the purity of His word. The Noble Qur’an is, therefore, the sacred text of Islam par excellence, just as Islam is the religion of the Noble Qur’an. Those who wish to follow Islam find themselves obliged to read and know the Qur’an, as it is one of the mainstays of their faith, and to read parts of it is on certain occasions obligatory. And those who wish to heed the Divine message of the Qur’an find themselves obliged to practice Islam, for that is the religion, the way of life and the system of belief Allah has chosen and perfected for those who would be His willing servants; and theirs is the best of ends.

The volume you have before you is a translation – so far – of parts of the Noble Qur’an, and of a commentary by the Grand Ayatollah Imam Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Shirazi, *may Allah lengthen his beneficial life*[1]*,* entitled *Taqrīb al-Qur’ān ilal-Adhhān*. It is rare that a man of such erudite learning and lofty status turns his whole attention to the noble Qur’an with the intention of elucidating the entire text, and it is a measure of Imam Shirazi’s learning and sincerity that he has in fact done so. We too, in our small way, hope to be able to present the full translation of Imam Shirazi’s commentary in the near future, by the will of Allah.

The translator owes a debt of gratitude to the Shirazi family, and dedicates this work to the soul of the late Sayyid Hasan Shirazi, brother of Imam Muhammad Shirazi, who was martyred in the Lebanon a few years after giving the translator his start in the traditional centres of Shi’a learning. May Allah raise his station.

---

[1] The translator, the late Salman Tawhidi, wrote this foreword a few years before his death when Imam Muhammad Shirazi was alive. Salman Tawhidi died in March 2001, and Imam Shirazi died in December 2001, may Allah bless their souls.

As to the style of translation, a literal style has been followed as closely as possible, for two reasons. First, because it accords most closely to the manner in which the Noble Qur'an was originally presented to the Prophet and his listeners; and second, because the presence of a commentary makes it unnecessary to incorporate into the translated text explanations that do not appear in the original. The translator is of the opinion that his leaving clear the clear and obscure the obscure, is of assistance in conveying in English something of that 'lofty Qur'anic grandeur which affects our hearts and moves us to tears'. That too is his hope; and from Allah comes all success.

Salman Tawhidi

Jami'at-ul-Muntazar, Manchester

15 Jamadi al-Thani, 1417 H / October 28, 1996 CE

Transliteration

In the Arabic language, there are a number of letters that do not have a corresponding equivalent in the English language. As a result the sound or pronunciation of those letters would be unfamiliar to the English reader who has not come across them before. Some of them may easily be pronounced by the English reader, whereas s/he would find others difficult to pronounce, unless he has already been exposed to the sounds of the Arabic alphabet.

Below the Arabic characters are given along with their equivalent English characters or sounds.

b	=	ب	z	=	ز	f	=	ف
t	=	ت	s	=	س	q	=	ق
th	=	ث	sh	=	ش	k	=	ك
j	=	ج	ṣ	=	ص	l	=	ل
ḥ	=	ح	ḍ	=	ض	m	=	م
kh	=	خ	ṭ	=	ط	n	=	ن
d	=	د	dh	=	ظ	h	=	ه
dh	=	ذ	^{c}	=	ع	w	=	و
r	=	ر	gh	=	غ	y	=	ي

Short: a = َ ; i = ِ ; u = ُ

Long: ā = ا ; ī = ي ; ū = و

This is an effort to describe the sounds of these letters, and or explain how their sounds are generated, hoping that the reader may obtain some idea about those particular characters, when they appear in some Arabic terms used in this work.

To distinguish these letters, either a combination of two letters are used or, in the case of the majority of the difficult letters, a normal Latin letter is used in association with a dot below it or a line or diacritic above as shown in the table above. Furthermore there are a couple of letters in the Arabic alphabet which are indicated using the symbols ’ and ^{c}.

Beginning with the easy ones, there is the letter that is symbolized as:

th, which sounds like the th in the word ‘*th*ree’. The other letter is symbolized as:

dh, which sounds like the th in the word ‘*th*ere’.

As for the difficult ones, they are as follows:

Ḥ or ḥ

The sound of this letter resembles the sound of 'strong, breathy' H. The sound for ḥ is generated from the proximity of the throat that the normal h is, but from an area slightly further up the throat, with more tension in the local throat muscle, with the back end of the tongue closing in against the roof of the throat immediately before the uvula.

Kh or kh

The sound for this is perhaps somewhere between of that of 'h' and 'k', as far as the location of mouth where it is generated is concerned. It is generated at the back of the mouth, by pressing the back end of the tongue against the soft palate whilst forcing the air through in the outward direction, causing the uvula to vibrate.

Some examples of the sound of kh found in English words or words that the English reader may be familiar with are:

Loch, the Scottish word for lake, where the ch in loch is pronounced as the designated kh in Arabic. Another example is *Mikhail*, as in Mikhail Gorbachev, where the kh is, or should be, pronounced as it is required in the Arabic language.

Ṣ or ṣ

The sound of this letter resembles the sound of 'strong' S. It is generated by involving the main trunk of the tongue, by slightly curving the centre of the front half of the tongue in the downward direction. In aid of pronouncing the sound of the 'strong' S, it would be helpful if you consider saying the normal letter 'S', when the front upper and lower teeth are brought closer together reducing the airflow, thus producing the sound of the letter 'S'. The opposite process is used to generate the sound of the 'strong' S, i.e. the sound is produced when slightly moving apart the upper and lower teeth, thus pronouncing the 'strong' S.

Ḍ or ḍ

The sound of this letter is somewhere near the sound of the normal D. Whereas the sound of a normal D is generated by placing the front end of the tongue at the front end of the hard palate or the roof of the mouth adjoining the top teeth, the sound of ḍ is generated by touching, to the same location, more of the front trunk of the tongue while caving in the middle part of the tongue.

<u>Dh</u> or <u>dh</u>

The best description of this sound is that it could be the strong version of the sound of 'dh' as in the word '*th*ere'. Whereas 'dh' is generated by placing the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower front teeth, whilst pressing against the upper front teeth, the sound for <u>dh</u> is generated by pressing more of the front end of the tongue between the upper and lower front teeth, whilst pressing against the upper front teeth, and the centre of the tongue is curved downwards.

Ṭ or ṭ

The sound of this letter resembles a 'strong' T. Whereas a normal T is generated by involving the front end of the tongue, the 'strong' T is generated by pressing the front end of the trunk of the tongue against the front end of the hard palate or the roof of the mouth. Also when the normal T is pronounced, the lower jaw does not move, whereas in the case of pronouncing the strong T, or Ṭ, the lower jaw moves outwards.

' or the hamzah, which is the character representing the glottal stop.

^{c} sometimes also shown as '

This symbol is used to characterize an Arabic alphabet that represents the sound of a strong 'throaty' A. Just as the sound for A is generated at the back of the throat, in the same proximity, the sound for ^{c} or ' is also generated with the difference that the entire throat back is engaged in the process by a stroke of contraction in the muscle there. In this process more of the throat is blocked, which also involves the back end of the tongue, than when pronouncing the normal A. Just in the case of the normal A, the sound is actually generated at the time of the release of the contraction of the muscles involved.

Gh or gh

The nearest sound for this is that of the French R.

Q or q

The sound for this letter is a short and sharp version of the letter 'gh' or the French R. Whereas in the process of generating the sound of 'gh' the back end of the tongue is pressed slightly against the uvula, allowing some air to flow, in the case of the sound of the Arabic alphabet represented by Q, the same process takes place with the difference that the passage is completely blocked, and the sound is actually generated by he sudden release of the passage.

‘Long’ a

There are also cases when there is a diacritic or a small horizontal line above the letter, like ā : this is to represent ‘long’ a, an alternative to writing aa. The nearest example for the long a, or ā, in English words is case of "far" as opposed to the word "fat". In the case of "far", the ‘a’ is elongated in the pronunciation, whereas in the case of "fat", the ‘a’ is short.

‘Long’ i

In the case of ī, it represents the pronunciation of the ee in the word ‘need’.

‘Long’ u

In the case of ū, it represents the pronunciation of the oo in the word ‘noon’.

‘Double’ letters

In the Arabic language, there are many instances where a letter in a word has double pronunciations with a very slight pause between the two. The first pronunciation is always the sound of the letter itself, and the second is the sound of the letter together with that of the following letter. For correct pronunciation of the word, it is important that there is a very slight pause between the sounds of the double letters. Some examples are as follows:

Allāh, where the presence of ‘ll’ indicates the requirement of the double pronunciation of the letter ‘l’. It may help if the word is considered as Al-lāh, with the pause due to the hyphen being very slight. Another example is Makkah.

N.B.

To emphasise the correct pronunciation of some Arabic words, the transliteration characters are normally used for words like Allāh, Qur’ān, Muḥammad, sūrah, āyah, etc. On the other hand, to adhere to simplicity it has been decided that diacritics and other transliteration characters are to be avoided where possible – in common words – where it is assumed that reader is or would be familiar with the pronunciation of those words, and that such characters are only used for less common and unfamiliar words only. So for such words as the above-mentioned, they would be written simply as Allah, Qur’an, Muhammad, surah, ayah, etc.

Along similar lines, names of prophets and messengers are generally presented in the Latin form in this work, although on the initial occasion for each case, the equivalent of the Arabic pronunciation is also given. e.g. in the case of the name of prophet Abraham, its Arabic equivalent of Ibrāhīm is also given for the first time, and subsequently only the Latin form is used for the sake of ease and simplicity for the English reader.

Prophets in the Holy Qur'an

The following lists names of some of the prophets and messengers of God that appear in the Holy Qur'an, along with their Biblical equivalents:

Prophets' Names in the Bible	Transliteration of Prophets' Arabic Names	Prophets' Names in the Qur'an
Adam	Ādam	آدم
Noah	Nūḥ	نوح
Abraham	Ibrāhīm	إبراهيم
Lot	Lūṭ	لوط
Ishmael	Ismāᶜīl	إسماعيل
Isaac	Isḥāq	إسحاق
Jacob	Yaᶜqūb	يعقوب
Joseph	Yūsuf	يوسف
Jethro	Shuᶜayb	شعيب
Moses	Mūsā	موسى
Aaron	Hārūn	هارون
David	Dāwūd	داود
Solomon	Sulaymān	سليمان
Jonah	Yūnus	يونس
Zacharias	Zakariyyā	زكريا
John (the Baptist)	Yaḥyā	يحيى
Jesus	ᶜIsā	عيسى
The **Comforter**, or ***parakletos*** of the Bible, which has been substituted for *perikletos*: an explanatory rendering of *'ahmad',* the Most Praised One. Ahmad is another name of the Prophet Muhammad; both are derived from the Arabic word meaning the Praised One – *perikletos* in Greek.	**Muhammad**	محمد

Glossary

Glossary of some of the terms that appear in this work:

āyah (plural āyāt):	literally means a sign of significance or a portent. In the context of the Holy Qur’ān an āyah also represents a verse or any numbered subdivision of a chapter or sūrah of the sacred book.
Ahl al-Bayt	literally means the household. In the context of the Holy Qur’an it is in reference to specific members of the family of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his descendents. Members of the Ahl al-Bayt are fourteen; they are Lady Fatimah al-Zahra’, her father – the prophet Muhammad, her husband – Imam Ali, and her two sons – Hasan and Husayn. The remaining nine members are all descendents of Imam Husayn peace be upon them. As well as “Ahl al-Bayt”, they are also known as the “Fourteen Ma^{c}ṣūm”. Amongst the Ahl al-Bayt, Imam Ali is the first Imam or appointed successor of the prophet and the Imam Mahdi is the twelfth and the last.
Amir al-Mu’minīn	literally means the Commander of the Believers. It is the title exclusively awarded to Imam Ali by the Prophet on the day of Ghadir on instructions from Almighty Allah.
^{c}alayhis-salām (masculine form)	literally means peace be upon him. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of one of the prophets or the one of the ma^{c}sūm members or Imams of the household of the Holy Prophet (the Ahl al-Bayt). This salutation is also used after the name of a noble and devout member of the Prophet who may not be ma^{c}sūm. (feminine form: ^{c}alayhas-salām, plural form: ^{c}alayhum-as-salām)
Ghadir Khum	Name of the location between Makkah and Madīnah where the Holy Prophet Muhammad received the revelation of 5: 67 to ‘formally’ appoint Imam Ali as his first successor.
Hijrah	literally means migration. It is in reference to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madīnah in 622 CE.

juz'	literally means 'part'. It is in reference to any of the almost equal 30 parts the Holy Qur'an is subdivided into. Each *juz'* covers one or more surahs depending on the length of the surah(s).
Khātam al-Anbiyā'	literally means the Seal of the Prophets. It is one of the titles of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
maᶜṣūm	literally means immune. It is used to designate someone being infallible or impeccable. A maᶜṣūm person is one who does not commit sin, does not make mistakes, does not forget, etc. although s/he has the choice to commit sin.
Madīnah	Also known as Medina, it is the holy city to which the Prophet migrated from Makkah, and took it as his abode until his death. The body of the Holy Prophet is buried in the mosque there.
Makkah	Also known as Mecca, and Baca. It is the Holy City where the symbolic House of God is located, and towards which the Muslims face to perform the daily prayers.
Rasūlollāh	literally means the Messenger of Allah. It is one of the titles of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
ṣallallāh ᶜalayhi wa ālih	literally means may Allah bless him and his family. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. His 'family' are his cousin and son-in-law Ali (who was appointed by Allah as his first successor), his daughter Lady Fatima al-Zahra, their sons Hasan and Husayn, and the nine maᶜsūm Imams who are all the descendents of Husayn. In Arabic, the 'family' is known as the Ahl al-Bayt, as referred to in the Qur'an in [33: 33].
sūrah	Any chapter of the Holy Qur'ān, which has its distinct name. A sūrah could be as long as fifty pages or as short as 14 words.
Thaqalayn	literally means two weights. This is in reference to the famous hadith of prophet in which he states, he has left the Muslims with two momentous entities; the Book of Allah and his Ahl al-Bayt.

Introduction

Before beginning to talk about the subject of this introduction, which is the Holy Qur'an itself, it would be appropriate to say something about the author of this extraordinary book – the Almighty Allah.

Allah

His Name

In Arabic, the main name of the One Deity that is the creator of all existence is known as Allāh, which is in fact the merged form of Al-Elāh, meaning The Deity or The God. The word Elāh is the Arabic equivalent of the corresponding Hebrew word Eloh, meaning God. In the merging process of Al-Elāh, the letter E is dropped from the pronunciation, and the spelling, of the name and the end result is the word Allāh.

The Beautiful Names of Allah

In addition to the main Name of the Almighty – Allāh – there are also the 99 names that are referred to as the Beautiful Names of Allāh. Some of these are as follows:

Transliteration of the Divine Names in Arabic	The approximate meaning of the Name
al-Aḥad	The One and Only
al-Ṣamad	The Overlord
al-Samī^c	The All-Hearing (of what is said and thought)
al-Baṣīr	The All-Seeing (of the seen and unseen)
al-Qadīr	The Omnipotent
al-Qāhir	The Conqueror
al-^cAliy	The Exalted
al-A^clā	The Most High
al-Bāqī	The Eternal
al-Badī^c	The Initiator of all creation
al-Bāri'	The Creator of all creation
al-Akram	The Most Noble
al-Bāṭin	The Concealed (beyond comprehension)
al-Ḥayy	The Ever-Living
al-Ḥakīm	The Wise
al-Ḥaqq	The Ultimate Truth

al-Ḥasīb	The Reckoner
al-Ḥamīd	The All-Praised and Ultimate Praiseworthy
al-Rabb	The Lord
al-Raḥmān	The most Merciful to all creation
al-Raḥīm	The most Compassionate to His believers
al-Razzāq	The Provider
al-Raqīb	The Watchful Supervisor
al-Ra'ūf	The Merciful and Compassionate
al-Ḥalīm	The Forbearing / Clement
al-Salām	The Peaceful One
al-Ṭāhir	The Pure
al-ᶜAdl	The Just, The Equitable
al-Ghafūr	The Most Forgiving
al-Ghaniy	The All-Sufficient, Free from Want
al-Malik	The King
al-Majīd	The Most Glorious
al-Karīm	The Generous
al-Kabīr	The Most Great
al-Nūr	The Light
al-Wadūd	The Loving One
al-Hādi	The Guiding One
al-Jalīl	The Majestic over all,
al-Jawād	The most Generous One

His Attributes

Amir-ul-Mu'minin (Commander of the Believers) Imam Ali, the successor of the Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon them*, describes some of the attributes of the Almighty:[2]

'He cannot be conceived of by the imagination and He cannot be determined by comprehension. He cannot be perceived by the senses and He cannot be compared with any person. He is One but not numerable and He is Eternal without end. He is the One who supports without being supported.'

Prophet Muhammad's successor also said,

[2] All quotes are from the book *Nahj-ul-Balaghah* (Peak of Eloquence) that is a collection of some of Imam Ali's speeches, letters and advices.

'He is Allah, the Clear Truth, truer and clearer than the eyes perceive. The intellects cannot reach Him by any definition, since that would be to compare Him; and the imagination cannot reach Him by any evaluation; since that would be to give Him a likeness. There is no beginning to His primacy and there is no end to His eternity. He is the First and the Eternal, and He is the Everlasting without end. Foreheads bow down before Him and lips declare His Oneness. He gave all things limitations when He created them, so as to make it clear that He is not like them.'

Imam Ali also said,

'The eyes cannot perceive Him with the sense of sight, but the heart can perceive Him through the realities of trust. He is close to all things without being associated with them. He is remote from them without being distanced from them. He speaks yet without speech. He wills yet without wanting. He creates yet without physical means. He is Subtle yet obscurity cannot be attributed to Him. He is Great yet aloofness cannot be attributed to Him. He is Seeing yet sensory perception cannot be attributed to Him. He is Compassionate but sentimentality cannot be attributed to Him.'

Amir-ul-Mu'minin also said,

'Time never changes for Him so as to cause a change in His state, and He is never in any particular place so as to entail His moving to another place. He knows of the secrets in the minds of the secretive, and the intimate meetings of those who meet behind closed doors, and the thoughts and opinions of those who speculate.'

He has sent numerous messengers and prophets to various peoples and at different intervals to guide man to the right path. The message they essentially convey is one, submission to and living in harmony with the will of Allah; the Arabic for this unison with the divine will is called *islam*. The religion of all those messengers has been one, which is *islam* to the will of the Almighty. Allah sent Moses with the Torah to all the peoples of his time, He sent Jesus with the Engīl (Evangel) to all the nations of the time, and ultimately He sent His final messenger, Muhammad, with the Qur'an to the peoples of all the worlds.

The Holy Qur'an

Its Eloquence, Beauty and Inimitability

The Holy Qur'an is the revealed word of Almighty Allah to His final messenger the holy Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family.* This revelation was in the Arabic language at a time when the Arabs used to pride themselves on the eloquence of their expression and the rhetoric of their poetry. Apart from its miraculous qualities, this new revelation showed some unparalleled eloquence of speech and writing such that the most able poets and orators were astounded before the beauty and magnificence of the text of this Qur'an. It had become a custom that the most eloquent poems and writings of the time were put on display around the 'House of God' – the Ka^{c}bah – and they would not be replaced unless by better and more superior ones. When the first few verses of the new revelation were put on display, the poets and orators pulled down their 'works of art'. Later, when some of the stubborn residents of Mecca refused to accept this new revelation as divine, as part of their counter measure they started their campaign of character assassination against the prophet, amongst which they said that this new revelation was the work of man. The Divine responded by inviting them to produce a work of similar beauty and elegance; He invited them to produce ten such surahs, or even one. No one did then, and no one has done so ever since. The shortest surah of the Qur'an is just fourteen words! The Qur'an is a living miracle by virtue of its beauty and mastery of eloquence apart from everything else.

As well being a book of beliefs and ethics, it is also a book of history, science and wisdom. In addition to being a book of law, it also teaches morals and conduct. In all it presents a system of teaching designed to help man materially and spiritually; help him lead a prosperous life in this world, while enabling him to prepare for the best life in the hereafter, which is the ultimate goal of the Qur'an.

Its Structure

The Holy Qur'an consists of 114 surahs (chapters) with each surah consisting of a number of verses (āyāt in Arabic, singular āyah). Some of the surahs may consist of only a few āyāt while others may contain tens or hundreds of verses. The Qur'an is divided into 30 almost equal *juz'* or parts, with each *juz'* covering one or more surah depending on the length of the surah(s).

Its Revelation

The Holy Qur'an is the revealed word of God. Every revelation the Messenger of God received by way of the archangel Gabriel, he relayed to the people in precise form. The Prophet Muhammad communicated the exact words of every revelation he received – without the smallest variation or alteration. With great care and enthusiasm, every and all verses and surahs of the Holy Qur'an were recorded in writing, and in fact a great many Muslims – of the order of thousands – had committed the whole of the Qur'an to memory. Not least, God's final messenger ensured that the entire Qur'an was compiled as a single 'bound' book during his lifetime. For this reason alone – and apart from its inimitability, miraculous qualities – the Holy Qur'an is taken to be the revealed word of God.

On the chronology of its revelation, some of the surahs were revealed while the prophet was in Makkah and therefore they are known as Makkan surahs, while others were revealed in Madinah, to become known as Madinan surahs. There are also some surahs where some of their āyāt were revealed in Makkah and some in Madinah. The layout and order of the various surahs of the Qur'an, as well as that of the verses or āyāt within each surah were determined by its author, the Almighty, and this is not necessarily the same as the chronological order in which the various verses or āyāt of the Holy Qur'an were revealed. The various āyāt were revealed depending on the surrounding circumstances and events. For example the first āyāt (or verses) that were revealed to the prophet were not those of the Qur'an's opening chapter (al-Ḥamd) but those of surah al-ᶜAlaq (The Blood-Clot) [96:1-5]:

﴾In the name of Allah, the compassionate the merciful
Read in the name of thy Lord who created,
Created man from blood clot,
Read and thy Lord is the most Munificent,
Who teaches man by the pen,
Teaches man what he knows not . . .﴿

Although the Holy Qur'an was revealed in stages over a period of some 23 years, at the outset, the entire Holy Qur'an descended upon the heart of the Messenger of Allah, *may Allah bless him and his family,* [97: 1]:

﴾Indeed We sent it down on the night of Qadr.﴿

The Final Messenger

Allah Almighty addresses His final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, saying: ﴾**We sent thee not but as a mercy to the worlds**﴿[3]

It can be seen from his biography that the prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family* cared passionately about the people and their well being, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.

In his endeavour to lead man to his salvation, he never held any grudge against anyone, not even against his enemies who went to great lengths to hinder his mission. He always returned evil with good.

Muhammad was born in 570 CE in the City of Mecca, where he grew up. His prophetic mission began at the age of forty when he 'formally' received the first of the divine revelation in the year 610 CE. From the outset of his divine mission he faced stubborn and hostile opposition from some of the citizens of Mecca, who were overwhelmingly idolaters, but the messenger of Allah never returned like with like, even in the face of harsh and aggressive conduct. As an instance of such conduct, a couple of events are cited here. The Prophet had grown accustomed to a barrage of assault whenever he passed through a particular route. An 'activist' would hurl everything he could find at the Prophet as he passed by, from stones to refuse and animal waste. One day, as the prophet passed through that route, there was no sign of this daily 'ritual', and nor of its perpetrator, and so he enquired to see why this was so. The Prophet was told the person concerned was ill. The Prophet went to his house to visit him and pray for his recovery.

On another occasion the Prophet was viciously assaulted by a group of the Meccans, but after he regained his composure, while he wiped the blood off his face he prayed, 'O Lord! Forgive my people for they understand not.'

Summarising his mission, Rasūlollāh (the Messenger of Allah) *may Allah bless him and his family* has been quoted as saying,

"Verily, I have been sent to perfect the noblest of morals."[4]

---

[3] The Holy Qur'an, The Prophets (21): 107.
[4] Mustadrak al Wasā'el, vol. 11, p 187.

With total devotion and unimaginable selflessness and magnanimity, he spared no effort to convey the divine message that had been revealed to him to mankind, so that they may attain salvation.

Equally he cared passionately about the *means* of guidance and salvation – the Message – he was conveying to mankind. In its pure and undistorted form, the message is the single most important entity for the guidance of all mankind. Therefore it must be protected from any distortion whatsoever – by all means possible – and therefore all necessary arrangements must be made in order to safeguard its transmission to future generations unscathed.

Two of the most pressing tasks that the Messenger of Allah had been assigned by his Lord to deal with during his lifetime in this world were:

1. He must make sure to compile the Holy Qur'an in its entirety as a 'bound' book (known as a *muṣḥaf),*
2. He must also make sure to appoint the successors to succeed him as leaders of mankind and guide man to the right path, those who would be the most knowledgeable about the Holy Qur'an.

The notion of these two tasks are emphasised in many of the prophetic teachings as will be seen shortly. For Allah would not send His final Messenger to mankind and reveal His ultimate book to him, only to stop at that stage. He would ensure that His Messenger gathers the revelation in a single book, and his messengership is continued by divinely appointed successors to the Messenger.

For the Muslims believe that the sending of the Prophet Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah to mankind and the revelation of the Holy Qur'an is the single most important event in the history of mankind, that the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah to all of mankind for as long as man lives on this planet, and the Holy Qur'an is His final revelation to man too. Yet there are those who assume that the Messenger of Allah did not endeavour to gather and compile the Qur'an, nor did he commit himself to appoint the successors to lead mankind after him!

Having endured untold hardship in the process of conveying the divine message, and given the total and absolute devotion he had to it, the final Messenger of Allah would most certainly not leave the successor issue unresolved, nor would he leave behind a Qur'an that is scattered on "scraps

of parchment and leather", "tablets of stone", "ribs of palm branches", and "camels' shoulder-blades and ribs" as some have us to believe.

The Compilation of the Qur'an

With the same passion and zeal that he had to convey the divine message, in the same way he ensured to make the necessary arrangements to compile a "bound" copy of the Holy Qur'an – known at the time of the holy Prophet, and also today, as the *muṣḥaf.* Traditions relate that the entire text of the Holy Qur'an was committed to writing on the instructions of prophet Muhammad to Imam Ali *peace be upon them*.

The Messenger of Allah commissioned *Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Believers) Ali son of Abi-Talib to gather and compile the entire Qur'an, which Imam Ali did during the lifetime of the holy prophet and under his supervision[5]. The Messenger of Allah validated and authenticated the end result – the *muṣḥaf* – even verifying the order and position of the individual verses within a given chapter or surah, as instructed by the Almighty. According to traditions, when archangel Gabriel used to reveal a particular ayah or verse to the prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family* the former would also indicate its position in the surah and the surah it belonged to.[6]

Reports indicate that during the lifetime of Rasūlollāh, when the Qur'an had been compiled as *muṣḥaf*, people used to come to the mosque of the prophet, where the compiled Qur'an – the *muṣḥaf* – was kept by the pulpit, to make their copies of the Holy Scripture.[7]

It is sometimes wrongly stated that the Holy Qur'an was for the first time compiled during the reign of the third ruler ᶜUthman ibn ᶜAffan, some twenty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family.* What was in fact commissioned at that time was to collect the incomplete documents holding verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an and either to complete them as copies of the entire Qur'an, or to destroy those documents that were incorrect in order to prevent them being disseminated as the correct/complete Qur'an. Any compilation that took

---

[5] Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 89, p 48, Beirut ed. See also *"The Qur'an: When was it compiled?"* by the author.

[6] *ibid*

[7] *ibid*

place during this time was to reproduce the authentic copy of the Holy Qur'an as per the version compiled by Imam Ali *peace be upon him* during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and under his supervision.

The *Ummi* Prophet

A common misnomer that is widespread about the final Messenger of God is that he was illiterate. With some research, the notion of the illiteracy of the Prophet can be refuted. The Prophet may not have normally exercised reading and writing in public, but there were exceptions even to this. Furthermore, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt *peace be upon them* were asked about the meaning of the Ummi in the phrase "Ummi Prophet", and they replied, "By Allah, he could read and write in seventy languages. As for the word Ummi in the title the "Ummi Prophet", it is the association to "Umm al-Qura", another name the City of Makkah is known for." The "Ummi Prophet" means the Prophet who is a citizen of Umm al-Qura.

The Divinely Appointed Successors

In addition to making sure that the Holy Qur'an was presented as a complete whole, there was another fundamental and vital task that Rasūlollāh had to do during his lifetime. On instructions from Allah, the Messenger of Allah appointed and named successors who would be the vanguards of the Holy Qur'an – the only qualified persons capable of teaching it – as well as leading the Muslim community according to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Messenger of Allah after him.

According to many hadith, the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family* states that his successors are 12, and then he goes on to give the names of these successors or Imams.[8] The 12 Imams, together with the Prophet, and his daughter Lady Fatima al-Zahra' are referred to as the Ahl al-Bayt, literally meaning the household (of the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family*). Although at the time of the Prophet, members of the Ahl al-Bayt were only five, the Prophet used to mention the names of the remaining members of the Ahl al-Bayt who were not born yet.

---

[8] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* vol. 3, p 1452-1453. *al-Mustadrak ᶜAla al-Ṣaḥīḥayn,* by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābouri, vol. 3, pp 715-716, and vol. 4, p 546, pub. Dar al-Kutub al-ᶜElmiyyah, Beirut. *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal,* vol. 5, pp 86-90, pub. Qurtubah Institute, Egypt. *Yanābīᶜ al-Mawaddah,* by al-Qundūzi al-Ḥanafi, vol. 3, p 281, section 76: the Twelve Imams and Their Names, pub. Dar al-Uswah. *Farā'id al Semṭayn,* by al-Ḥamwinī, vol. 2, p 132, hadith 431.

The Ahl al-Bayt refers only to the *maᶜṣūm* or impeccable members of the family/descendents of the holy Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family*. A *maᶜṣūm* person is one who does not commit sin, does not make mistakes, does not forget, etc. although s/he has the choice to commit sin. The Ahl al-Bayt are also known as the 'Fourteen Maᶜṣūm'. The Ahl al-Bayt's state of *ᶜEṣmah* or immunity from committing sin, mistake, etc. is referred to in the Holy Qur'an:

﴾Verily Allah wills to keep off (any trace of thing or act) unclean from ye O Ahl al-Bayt and purify ye a thorough purification.﴿[9]

Contrary to some misconceptions, in addition to the Qur'anic evidence, many hadith from Prophet Muhammad specifically state that the wives of the Prophet are not included in the Ahl al-Bayt as far as the qualities and attributes of the Ahl al-Bayt such as the one referred to in the above verse, are concerned.[10]

History fails to record the slightest error or wrong attributed to Ahl al-Bayt. This is one of the reasons for them being the most eligible to lead mankind according to the teachings of the Messenger of Allah and His Book. The second being that they are the most knowledgeable about the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet.

The Inseparable Entities

The divine message revealed to the final Messenger of Allah consists of no less – and no more – than two inseparable and complementary components – the Holy Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt, as stated in many hadith.

One of the hadith unanimously accepted as reliable, which specifically states the above is the famous "Thaqalayn" hadith:

---

[9] The Holy Qur'an, The Confederates (33): 33.
All the divine prophets are also considered *maᶜsūm,* for they are the conveyers of the divine message from the Almighty to mankind, and thus this transmission must be done in the perfect way. Furthermore, they must set mankind a perfect example in all aspects of life and conduct for others to follow.

[10] *Dhakhā'er al-ᶜUqbā,* Ahmad ibn Abdullah al-Ṭabari, p 21. *al-Muᶜjam al-Kabīr* by al-Ṭabarānī, vol. 2, p 55. *Asad al-Ghābah,* by Ibn Athīr, vol. 2, p 12.

"I leave with ye the two momentous things – the book of Allah and my kin the people of my Ahl al-Bayt. As long as ye adhere to them both ye will never go astray after me." [11]

On the same topic, but emphasising the issue from a different angle, a variant of the same hadith is narrated as follows:

"I leave with ye the two momentous things – the book of Allah and my kin the people of my Ahl al-Bayt. They will never separate from one another until they arrive to me at the well (of al-Kawthar in Paradise)."

The combination of the book of Allah, and the Ahl al-Bayt secures guidance to the Right Path and salvation. With the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Prophet, it is the members of the Ahl al-Bayt who have the full knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, and therefore it is by adhering to these two momentous entities that one is guaranteed one will never go astray. If one were to take up the Qur'an but abandon the Ahl al-Bayt, then one would not attain the salvation one is seeking but in fact would go astray without realising it.

According to many hadith, Rasūlollāh always used to refer the Muslims to the Ahl al-Bayt – at the time notably Ali – for they are the most knowledgeable about the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet. In the famous hadith of City of Knowledge, the final Messenger of Allah states,

"I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its Gate, so whosoever wishes to access this City, then let him do so through its Gate."[12]

---

[11] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī,* vol. 5, p 328, hadith 3874 & 3876, pub. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, and vol. 13, p 199-200, pub. Maktabat al-Ṣāwī, Egypt, and vol. 2, p 308, pub. Boulāq, Egypt. *Musnad Ahmad,* vol. 3, pp 17, 26, 59, and vol. 4, pp 366, 371, and vol. 5, p 181, pub. al-Maymaniyyah, Egypt. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* Book of Merits, Merits of Ali ibn Abi Talib, vol. 2, p 362, pub. [c]Isa al-Halabi, and vol. 7, p 122, pub. Ṣabīḥ, and vol. 15, p 170 with commentary of al-Nuwawi, Egypt. *Dorar al-Semṭayn,* by al-Zarandi al-Ḥanafi, p 231-232, pub. al-Qadhā' al-Najaf. *Yanābī[c] al-Mawaddah,* by al-Qundūzi al-Ḥanafi, pp 29-31, 36, 28, 41, 183, 191, 296, 370, pub. Istanbul. *Tafsir of Ibn Kuthayr,* vol. 4, p 113, publisher: Dar Iḥiyā' al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, Egypt. *Jāmi[c] al-Uṣūl,* by Ibn Athīr, vol. 1, p 187, hadith 65-66, pub. Egypt. *Mu[c]jam al-Kabīr* by al-Ṭabarānī, p 137. . .

[12] *al-Mustadrak [c]ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn,* by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābouri, Vol. 3, pp 137-138, hadith 4637 and 4639, publisher: Dar al-Kutub al-[c]Elmiyyah, Beirut. *Majma[c] al-Zawā'id,* by Nur-ed-Din Ali ibn Abu Bakr al-Haythami, Vol. 9, p 114, publisher: Dar al-Rayyan Lil-Turath, Cairo. *Tārīkh Baghdād,* by Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Vol. 2, p 377, hadith 877, publisher: Dar al-Kutub al-[c]Elmiyyah, Beirut, also in Vol. 4, p 348, hadith 2186, and Vol. 7, p 172, hadith 3613, and Vol. 11, p 49-50. …

Rasūlollāh had passed on all his knowledge to his first successor Imam Ali, and, in turn, Imam Ali passed on this knowledge to his successor, and so on.

The Direct Intervention

These two momentous entities are inseparable in that they will never contradict one another but in fact will always complement one another until the day of judgement.

The Holy Prophet uses different notions and metaphors to stress different issues from different angles to emphasise the significance of adhering to both of these momentous entities, for otherwise it will lead to loss and going astray.

Although everything that the holy Prophet Muhammad says or does is on the basis of divine commands and instructions, since «**he talks not of desire, but it is a revelation that is revealed**.»[13] and therefore the above 'Thaqalayn' hadith, along with any other hadith that the Prophet has stated, are based on Divine orders and instructions, it seems that in the case of the appointment of Imam Ali *peace be upon him* – the first of 12 the successors to the holy Prophet – the Almighty 'intervened' directly in the issue.

On the 18th of the month of Dhil-Hijjah, year 10H, circa 631 CE, the Almighty commanded His final Messenger to formally, and publicly, appoint his first successor to lead the Muslims after him through this 'stern and warningful' revelation, the like of which there is none in the Holy Qur'an:

«**O Messenger! Convey that that has been revealed to thee from thy Lord, and if thee do not, then thee would have not conveyed His Message; and Allah will protect thee from the people. Surely Allah guides not the disbelieving people.**»[14]

This ayah emphasises the absolute necessity of the role of the divinely appointed successor to the final Messenger of Allah, and in turn to the Muslims and mankind. In this verse, the Almighty, *glory be to Him,* equates the appointment of the Imam Ali, *peace be upon them,* to Islam itself . . . a notion that deserves some very careful considerations. After 23 years of excruciating struggle by Rasūlollāh to convey Islam and deliver the

---

[13] The Holy Qur'an, The Star (53): 3-4.

[14] The Holy Qur'an, The Table Spread (5): 67.

Holy Qur'an to mankind, the Almighty tells His final messenger that all that struggle is tantamount to nothing without the *Imamah*, or leadership, of the divinely appointed successors of the Messenger, the first of whom is Ali son of Abi-Talib. The Almighty is telling the Muslims or the reader in general that Islam without the leadership of Imam Ali (and subsequently of the Ahl al-Bayt) is not Islam.

The Perfection of Religion and Blessings

The day on which Ali son of Abi-Talib was 'formally' appointed by the Messenger of Allah – on direct instruction from the Almighty – as the first successor of the prophet and the leader or *imam* of the Muslim Ummah, is known as Eid of Ghadir Khum. For the divine revelation to the Prophet concerning this appointment and its execution took place in a valley known as Ghadir Khum.

History records that there were some 120,000 Muslims present on the occasion of this momentous event, as they were returning from what became known as the farewell Hajj pilgrimage to which the Prophet had gone. [A significantly large number of Muslim pilgrims went to the Hajj this particular season when they learnt that the Prophet was going to Hajj.]

After the declaration of the appointment, on the instructions of the Almighty, Rasūlollāh ordered all those present to pay *bay^{c}ah* or duty bound homage of allegiance to Imam Ali as the successor of the Prophet and *Amir al-Mu'minin;* Commander of the Believers, to which the Muslims duly obliged. [The title *Amir al-Mu'minin* was exclusively granted to Imam Ali by the Messenger of Allah, to which no single other person is entitled, as stated by the Prophet.] Amongst the first people to pay this *bay^{c}ah* to Imam Ali and to congratulate him for this appointment, were Abu Bakr and Omar, who began to address him as the Amir al-Mu'minin.

After this grand event, the Almighty makes the ultimate declaration. Allah, *glory be to Him,* heralds this appointment as the "perfection of the religion" and "completion of His blessings" upon mankind in His words:

﴾**Today I have perfected your religion for ye, and I have completed My Blessing upon ye, and I have approved Islam for ye as a religion.**﴿[15]

[15] The Holy Qur'an, The Table Spread (5): 3.

This verse is another example of the Divine emphasis on the significance of the successorship of Imam Ali, (and those of the remaining 11 Imams).

The *Ahl al-Bayt*

Teachers of the Qur'an, Successors of the Prophet

With the Prophet Muhammad being the Almighty's final messenger to mankind, the twelve ma^c^ṣūm Imams or leaders from the Ahl al-Bayt have been appointed by the Almighty to continue the message of the Seal Of The Prophets – Khātam al-Anbiyā'.

As seen from the hadith of the "City of Knowledge", the Ahl al-Bayt received all the knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad, and this makes them the most knowledgeable individuals about Islam and the Holy Qur'an. Furthermore, according to the "Purification" verse [33: 33], the Ahl al-Bayt are also 'immune' from any error, oversight or wrong. It is for such reasons that they are appointed as the successors of the Prophet to lead the Muslims, in accordance with the verse of "Conveyance" [5: 67].

Without the leadership of these 12 Imams or divinely appointed successors of the Prophet, the "Conveyance" verse tells us Islam is not complete. However, 'Islam is perfected' and the 'blessings are completed' under the leadership of the Imam Ali (and the other 11 Imams) as indicated in the verse of "perfection of religion", [5: 3].

Rasūlollāh gave the names of the Imams even though at the time of revelation of the "purification" verse, there were only five members of the Ahl al-Bayt, and the remaining nine were not born then. Those 'five persons' were Lady Fatimah al-Zahra', her father – the prophet Muhammad, her husband – Imam Ali, and her two sons – Hasan and Husayn. The remaining nine members are all descendents of Imam Husayn *peace be upon them*.

As well as "Ahl al-Bayt", they are also known as the "Fourteen Ma^c^ṣūm". Amongst the Ahl al-Bayt, Imam Ali is the first Imam or appointed successor (caliph) of the prophet and the Imam Mahdi is the twelfth, as stated by the

prophet in many hadith[16]. The names of the "Fourteen Maᶜṣūm" are as follows:

The Fourteen Maᶜṣūm of the Ahl al-Bayt *peace be upon them*		
Name		**Title**
1. The Prophet	Muḥammad	Rasūlollāh
2. Lady	Fāṭimah al-Zahra'	Sayyidat-Nisā' al-Ālamīn
3. The 1st Imam	Ali	Amir al-Mu'minīn
4. The 2nd Imam	Ḥasan	al-Mujtaba
5. The 3rd Imam	Ḥusayn	al-Shahid
6. The 4th Imam	Ali	Zayn al-ᶜĀbidin
7. The 5th Imam	Muḥammad	al-Bāqir
8. The 6th Imam	Jaᶜfar	al-Ṣādiq
9. The 7th Imam	Mūsā	al-Kādhim
10. The 8th Imam	Ali	al-Riḍā
11. The 9th Imam	Muḥammad	al-Jawād
12. The 10th Imam	Ali	al-Hādi
13. The 11th Imam	Ḥasan	al-ᶜAskari
14. The 12th Imam	Muḥammad	al-Mahdi

[16] See for example, *Yanābīᶜ al-Mawaddah,* by al-Qundūzi al-Ḥanafi, vol. 3, p 281, section 76: the Twelve Imams and Their Names, publisher, Dar al-Uswah. *Farā'id al Semṭayn,* by al-Ḥamwinī, vol. 2, p 132, hadith 431. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* vol. 3, p 1452-1453. *al-Mustadrak ᶜAla al-Ṣaḥīḥayn,* by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābouri, vol. 3, pp 715-716, and vol. 4, p 546, publisher Dar al-Kutub al-ᶜElmiyyah, Beirut. *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal,* vol. 5, pp 86-90, publisher Qurtubah Institute, Egypt.

The *Tafsir*

The primary methodology he uses in his *tafsir* or commentary clarifying the various verses, the author principally resorts to the Arabic language syntax and grammar, as well as the root of the word(s) concerned to explain the significance of the particular verse or word(s). For the holy book is in eloquent Arabic language, as well as the original commentary, and therefore referring to the principles of the language to derive the meaning would be the first port of call. On certain occasions the author specifically refers to the teachings or hadith from the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, by quoting certain narrations or reports. Direct references to and quotations from the Ahl al-Bayt have been kept to minimum for brevity and simplicity, for otherwise the Ahl al-Bayt are the sole teachers of the Holy Qur'an, and they are the second of the two momentous entities the final Messenger of Allah left behind for mankind to follow.

Traditionally, with the exception of the first surah, the starting ayah or verse of each surah, which is the *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful"* is not numbered, despite it being written in the text of the sacred scripture, and therefore the following ayah in the chapter is numbered as the first verse. It is the opinion of the author of this commentary – who is one of the most eminent authorities on Islam in recent history – that the ayah *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful"* is part of each surah that it begins with and therefore should be numbered as ayah number 1. Only in Surah al-Ḥamd, which is the first surah of the Holy Qur'an, the first ayah *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful"* is traditionally numbered as number 1. The Surah named 'Repentance', the 9th surah of the Holy Qur'an, is the only surah in the Qur'an that does not begin with the ayah *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful"*.

In the Arabic original of this commentary, the author specifically numbers the ayah *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful"* as the first ayah of each surah of the Holy Qur'an that begins with this ayah; in the same way that this ayah is numbered as number 1 in Surah al-Ḥamd, the opening chapter of the sacred book. To avoid confusion for the reader who may be used to the traditional numbering system, it was decided that the 'traditional' numbering system is used, as this is the one that is currently widespread.

This unique commentary or *tafsir, Taqrīb al-Qur'ān ilal-Adhhān,* literally meaning 'Bringing the Qur'an Closer to the Minds', covers the entire Qur'an and is published in ten volumes, each volume covering three *juz'* or parts of the holy book. This current translation covers the last three *juz'* of the holy book, i.e. 28, 29, and 30.

Needless to say, in addition to this *tafsir,* the author has a number of other extremely valuable works of *tafsir* on the Holy Book, some of which are as follows:

al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū ͨī lil-Qur'ān,	*10 volumes,*
Tawḍīḥ al-Qur'ān,	*3 volumes,*
Tabyīn al-Qur'ān,	*1 volumes,*

In addition to the works of *tafsir* about the Qur'an, the author has also compiled noticeable works related to the Sacred Scripture:

Ḥawl al-Qur'ān al-Karīm,

Muḥammad wal-Qur'ān,

Matā Jumi ͨa al-Qur'ān?

The above work has been translated into English and published as "The Qur'an: When was it Compiled?".

The author has also written many works on the biographies of personalities and prophets, as well as events referred to in the Holy Qur'an. Some of them are as follows:

Qiṣaṣ al-Ḥaqq;	*50 volumes,*
Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wal Riwāyāt	

The work done so far

The translation effort of this *tafsir* was started by the late Salman Tawhidi. Having completed the translation of nine *juz'* of the Holy Qur'an, Salman went on the spiritual journey of the Hajj pilgrimage. Five days after his return from the Hajj trip, he went on the ultimate journey to meet his Lord. Salman passed away on Friday 20 Dhil-Hijjah 1421 H, 16 March 2001 CE. May Allah bless his soul.

As the translation of the entire Qur'an and its commentary have not been completed as yet, it has been decided to go ahead with the publication of those parts that are ready for publication. It was thought that the last volume in the series, which covers the last three *juz'* or parts of the sacred book should be published first. These address issues of belief, as well as life in this temporary world and in the hereafter, which is the one eternal. Such matters would be more of an immediate concern to those novices to Islam than most. It is worth noting that the surahs or chapters of the Holy Qur'an which were first revealed were predominantly those of the latter *juz'* of the sacred book, which are presented here.

The holy book is divided into thirty almost equal *juz'* or parts. This volume covers parts 28-30. Parts 1-6 of the sacred book and its associated commentary have also been translated awaiting publication. Parts 7-27, and commentary, have yet to be translated.

In the course of preparing the English translation of the *tafsir* for publication, it was deemed necessary to proof read the work to ensure accuracy as far as humanly possible. There were some slight alterations or modifications that needed to be implemented. In the process, several issues needed to be clarified as far as the original Arabic was concerned. This was done by referring to a number of scholars including the distinguished authority on Islam, His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Sadiq Shirazi.

Although there were at least four stages of proofing the English text, the translation of the Holy Qur'an – however accurate it may be – falls short of conveying the wealth of the meanings that the miraculous text of the original Arabic conveys. For any human effort simply can never match or come anywhere near the standard of the divine work.

Although everything humanly possible has been done to ensure the accuracy of the translation of this work, one can never guarantee perfection, and we would therefore welcome any possible translation inaccuracy that is brought to our attention.

Notes

When reading the commentary of the Sacred Book, the reader should note the following points. The formats of citing Qur'anic verses used are as follows:

In the short form format, the number of the order of the surah as it appears in the Holy Qur'an is given followed by the number of the verse(s) being cited, separated by a colon. For example, if verses 3 and 4 of the surah # 53 were cited, the format would be: **53: 3-4.** In the long format, the name of the surah is also given: **The Holy Qur'an, The Star (53): 3-4.**

The names 'Allah', 'God', and 'the Almighty' are used interchangeably to refer to the Deity and the One Creator of existence. Similarly the 'Prophet', the 'Messenger of Allah', 'Rasūlollāh' and the 'Messenger of God' are all taken to mean one person; the final messenger of Allah the Holy Prophet Muhammad *may God bless him and his family.* In the same way, 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib', 'Ali son of Abi-Talib', 'Imam Ali', and 'Amir al-Mu'minin' are all interchangeably used to refer to one person, the first successor of the Prophet Muhammad as appointed by the Almighty. Furthermore, 'Imam', and 'caliph' are also used interchangeably to refer to one of the 12 God-appointed successors of the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his pure family.*

All explanatory notes given within [ ] as well as the footnotes are the editor's.

Zuhair Olyabek
Ramaḍān 1424
November 2003

The Author of the *Tafsir*

Ayatollah al-Udhma al-Imam Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Shirazi is undoubtedly the most eminent *Marje'* or authority on Islam in modern times. A charismatic leader who is known for his high moral values, modesty and spirituality, Imam Shirazi is a mentor and a source of aspiration to millions of Muslims; and the means of access to authentic knowledge and teachings of Islam. He has tirelessly devoted himself, and his entire life, to the cause of Islam and Muslims in particular, and to that of mankind in general. He has made extensive contributions in various fields of learning ranging from Jurisprudence and Theology to Government, Politics, Economics, Law, and Sociology. Through his original thoughts and ideas he has championed the causes of issues such as the family, human rights, freedom of expression, political pluralism, non-violence, and Shura or consultative system of leadership.

Born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1347 AH, 1928 CE, the young Muhammad Shirazi continued his studies of different branches of learning under the guidance of various eminent scholars and specialists, as well as his father, the renowned *Marje'* of the time, Ayatollah al-Udhma Mirza Mahdi Shirazi. In the course of his training he showed an outstanding talent and a remarkable appetite for learning as well as a tireless commitment to his work and the cause he believed in. His extraordinary ability, and effort, earned him the recognition at the age of 25, by the *Maraje'* and scholars of the time, of being a Mujtahid, a fully qualified religious scholar and lawmaker in the sciences of Islamic jurisprudence and law. He was subsequently able to assume the office of the *Marje'* at the early age of 33 in 1380 AH, 1961.

Imam Shirazi is distinguished for his intellectual ability and holistic vision. He has written various specialized studies that are considered to be among the most important references in the relevant fields. He has enriched the world with his staggering contribution of more than 1100 books, treatise and studies on various branches of learning. His works range from introductory works for the youth to literary and scientific masterpieces. Deeply rooted in the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet of Islam, his vision and theories cover such areas as Theology, Philosophy, History, Legislation, Management, Environment, Governance, Law and Islamic Doctrine. His work on Islamic Jurisprudence (the *al-Fiqh* series) for example constitutes 150 volumes, which run into more than 70,000 pages.

Imam Shirazi came to prominence in Iraq from the early 1960's – for his educational projects and institutions he continued to set up and for his relentless endeavour to bring about a renaissance amongst the Muslims and their countries through education and reawakening the Muslim masses about the teachings of Islam. But education of the masses is not something puppet regimes are fond of. His works and efforts were ruthlessly crushed by the iron-fisted tyrannical regime of the country's Ba'thist regime run by the then deputy president the notorious Saddam Hussein. Having arrested and subjected his brother, Ayatollah Hasan Shirazi, to near death torture, Saddam's Ba'thist regime sentenced Imam Muhammad Shirazi to the death by firing squad in absentia, which forced him to migrate to Kuwait in 1970.

Throughout the 1970's in Kuwait Imam Shirazi continued his endeavour of mass education as he had in Iraq, but with a greater degree of freedom than his native country.

In 1980 Imam Shirazi moved to the holy city of Qum in Iran, to continue his movement disseminating the teachings of Islam as taught by the Prophet Muhammad and his noble and infallible Ahl al-Bayt.

Throughout his life, because of his total dedication to the Teachings of Islam, and because of his views on various issues, which are based on those teachings, he came under sustained pressure. His views on, and his call for issues such as freedom of expression, party political pluralism, peace and non-violence brought about the wrath of the authorities. His uncompromising stance on implementing the teachings of Islam in all aspects; including such vital government matters as leadership by consensus – *Showral-Foqaha'-al-Maraje'* (religious authorities' council of leadership) attracted the fury of those at the helm in Iran. Imam Shirazi's freedom and activities were restricted; his staff, followers, and family members were subjected to continued harassment, arbitrary arrest and torture, throughout the eighties and the nineties.

Having spent the entire of his adult life striving for the greater enlightenment of the Muslims and mankind, Imam Shirazi died in the holy city of Qum, Iran, on Monday the 2nd Shawwal 1422 AH, 17th December 2001. More than half a million people attended his funeral procession the following day.

Imam Shirazi believed in the fundamental and elementary nature of freedom in mankind. He used to call for freedom of expression, debate and discussion, tolerance and forgiveness. He continuously called for the establishment of the universal Islamic government to encompass all the Muslim countries. These and other ideas are discussed in detail in his books of more than 1100.

Surah al-Mujādilah (58)

'The Pleading Woman'

سورة المجادلة

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *tujādiluka,* meaning 'she pleads with thee', from the root *mujādalah*, 'pleading'. Like the other Madinan surahs, it addresses the social order, alongside matters of faith. Whereas the preceding surah, *al-Ḥadīd*, concluded on the theme of His profusion, glory be to Him, so this surah opens on the theme of an instance of Allah's profusion, namely His response to the wishes of a lady who came to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*[17], complaining of a situation concerning her husband, and seeking that he give her a release from the difficulty in which she found herself. He therefore clarified the practical ruling.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah ... We begin with the name of the Allah, who is deserving of all praise and all glorifications – for in beginning by His name we observe His right to be preferred before all others, as befits His magnificence.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful He who bestows from His mercy upon every person and everything, for as it is said, 'He gives to those who ask, and He gives to those who ask not and know Him not – in tenderness from Him and mercy.'

Allah has indeed heard the word of she who pleaded with thee about her husband and complained to Allah; and Allah hears your conversation, indeed Allah is hearing, seeing. (1)

قَدْ سَمِعَ ٱللَّهُ قَوْلَ ٱلَّتِى تُجَٰدِلُكَ فِى زَوْجِهَا
وَتَشْتَكِىٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَآ ۚ إِنَّ
ٱللَّهَ سَمِيعٌۢ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

[17] *ṣallallah ᶜalayhi wa ālih*, meaning may Allah bless him and his pure family. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. His 'family' are his cousin and son-in-law Ali (who was appointed by Allah as his first successor), his daughter Lady Fatima al-Zahra, their sons Hasan and Husayn, and the nine impeccable Imams who are all the descendents of Husayn. In the Holy Qur'an – [33: 33] – the 'family' is referred to as the Ahl al-Bayt.

Allah has indeed heard the word of she who pleaded with thee about her husband and complained to Allah; ... her state and what has befallen upon her. The name of the lady was Khawlah; her husband's name was Aws ibn Ṣāmit.

... and Allah hears your conversation, ... The pronoun 'your' in 'your conversation' is the twin-plural, so that it means the conversation of the Messenger and the lady who appealed to him.

... indeed Allah is hearing, seeing ... This implies, here, that the two were being watched and listened to by Allah, glory be to Him.

It is stated in *Majma^c al-Bayān*[18], briefly, that the verse or portent (āyah in Arabic) was sent down concerning a lady of the Anṣār[19], of tribe of Khazraj. Her name was Khawlah, and she was good looking, and her husband was Aws ibn Ṣāmit. Seeing her in prostration during her prayer, when she had come away from the prayer, her husband wanted her but she rejected him. He became angry with her, and as he was a hasty, reckless man, he said to her, 'You are like my mother's back to me *(antī ᶜalayya ka dhahri ummī)!'* He then regretted having said this, since for the pagan Arabs it was a formula of divorce (called *dhihār*. *dhihār* is a derivative of *dhahr* meaning the back.). He said to her that he supposed she was now forbidden for him. She replied that he shouldn't say that, but that he should go to Allah's Messenger and ask him. He said that he found himself too ashamed to ask him about it, so she said to him that he should bid her to ask him. 'Ask him,' he said.

So she went to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family,* and complained to him that her husband was Aws ibn Ṣāmit, that he had married her when she had been young and wealthy with property and kinfolk, and that he had consumed her wealth and taken her youth, separated her from her family and now that she was old he had pronounced the 'mother's back' formula to leave her. Then she said that her husband regretted what he had said, and was there any way they could get back together again?

The Messenger of Allah said, 'I see only that you are banned for him'.

She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, by Him who sent down the Book upon thee, he did not say the divorce; and he is the father of my children and the dearest of all people to me!'

---

[18] It is a commentary on the holy Qur'an, by Ṭabrasi, d. 548H/1153CE.

[19] Literally it means supporters, i.e. the Muslims of Medina who supported the migrants (Muhājerin) from Makkah.

So he said, ‘I see only that you are banned for him, and in your case I am not instructed otherwise.’ At this she began to pray, saying, ‘I complain to Allah of my loss, my need and the severity of my condition! O Allah, send down upon the tongue of Thy Messenger!’ This was the first instance of *dhihār* in Islam. Then she said, ‘Consider my case, may Allah make me your sacrifice.’

At that the revelation came down upon the Messenger, and he told her to summon her husband. Then the Messenger recited to him *‘Allah has heard...’* until the completion of the āyah. Then he asked him if he had the means to free a neck, meaning a slave. [This is the requirement to restore the relationship, as stated in the third verse here.] The man said that such would mean the end of his wealth, and that slaves were expensive. So the Prophet asked him whether he could fast for two months consecutively. The man replied, ‘By Allah, if I don’t eat three meals my eyes become dim and I fear that I will become dim-sighted.’ So the Messenger of Allah asked if he could feed sixty paupers. He replied that he could not, ‘unless you help me in that, O Allah’s Messenger!’ So the Prophet said that he would assist him to the amount of fifteen *sāʿ* [of wheat], and that he would pray for blessings for him. And so he helped him to that amount. [One *sāʿ* is three *modd*, and one *modd* is equivalent to approximately three quarters of one kilogram. Thus fifteen *sāʿ* is approximately 34 kilogram. ‘Feeding sixty paupers’ means each pauper must be given at least one *modd* of wheat.]

Now He explains, glory be to Him, the censure of dhihār, in His word:

Those of ye who declare their wives “as their mother’s back”; they are not their mothers. Indeed their mothers are but those who gave birth to them. Indeed they say a dishonourable word, and a perfidy. And Allah is indeed oft-pardoning, oft-forgiving. (2)

ٱلَّذِينَ يُظَٰهِرُونَ مِنكُم مِّن نِّسَآئِهِم مَّا هُنَّ
أُمَّهَٰتِهِمْۖ إِنْ أُمَّهَٰتُهُمْ إِلَّا ٱلَّٰٓـِٔي وَلَدْنَهُمْۚ
وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ مُنكَرًا مِّنَ ٱلْقَوْلِ وَزُورًاۚ
وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ ٢

Those of ye who declare their wives “as their mother’s back” ... “declaring one’s wife as one’s mother’s back” is given for *dhihār*, which is the declaration made by the husband to his wife, ‘You are like my mother’s back to me!’ Pronouncing this phrase meant irrevocable divorce for the pre-Islamic Arabs. Its meaning is that just as one’s mother’s back is forbidden for a man, so too his wife has now become forbidden to him. Islam endorsed the saying of this expression to be a cause of a man’s wife becoming forbidden to him, *with* the

conditions that apply to divorce, like the presence of two just witnesses, and so on. Yet this manner of divorce is forbidden, and Islam requires the return to the wife through paying a penance.

... they are not their mothers ... The mere saying of such a word does not turn a man's wife into his mother.

... Indeed their mothers are but those who gave birth to them; ... The mothers of the men who declare *dhihār* are those who gave birth to them. For there is no maternal reality or relationship between the declarer [of *dhihār*] and the target of the declaration [his wife].

... And they say a dishonourable word, ... Likening one's wife to one's mother is dishonourable [disrespectful to the wife]; it has no substance in reality and no place in the Law, and is therefore invalid.

... and a perfidy ... It is a breach of truth, a lie, as that which has no substance in reality and no place in the Law, is obviously false. Nevertheless, he who says it should not despair of the pardon of Allah and His grace, as the doors of repentance are always open:

... And Allah indeed is oft-pardoning, oft-forgiving. He is oft-pardoning of the disobedient, and forgiving of their sins. 'Oft-Pardoning' is given for *ᶜafuww*, 'forgiving' for *ghafūr*. The difference is that to pardon is to abstain from imposing a punishment, without this necessitating concealment of the sin so that it does not become apparent, like the governments that sometimes pardon criminals, although their crimes remain on the records; whereas forgiveness includes the concealment of the disobedience, so that it is erased from His lists, glory be to Him.

The theme now turns to clarify the objective ruling, and what that entails:

And those who declare their wives "as their mother's back" and then retract what they have said, should free a neck before they touch each other. That is what ye are admonished with, and Allah is informed of what ye do. (3)

وَٱلَّذِينَ يُظَٰهِرُونَ مِن نِّسَآئِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا
قَالُوا۟ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَتَمَآسَّا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ
تُوعَظُونَ بِهِۦ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ٣

And those who declare their wives "as their mother's back" and then retract what they have said, ... Those who declare *dhihār* against their wives and then

wish to restore relations with their wives and rescind their word that caused the prohibition:

... should free a neck... In order for them to enjoy sexual intercourse with their wives, they must set free a possessed slave. A slave is called 'a neck', as an instance of a whole being known by a part.

... before they touch each other... 'touch' is a reference to sexual acts, as these are forbidden before the freeing of a slave.

... This is what ye are admonished with, ... 'This' means the obligation of setting free, which we are 'admonished with'. An 'admonishment' *(wa*[c]*dh),* is a warning of an action the consequence of which is punishment; failure to set free and then to engage in intimacy would lead to punishment, as it is disobedience.

... and Allah is informed of what ye do. He knows, glory be to Him, whenever intimacy is engaged in without making the penance, and therefore it is for us not to commit that which brings punishment.

So whosoever finds it not, then a fast for two consecutive months before they touch each other. So whosoever is unable, then feeding sixty paupers – that is for ye to believe in Allah and His Messenger. And those are Allah's boundaries, and for the disbelievers is a painful chastisement. (4)

فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِن قَبْلِ
أَن يَتَمَآسَّا ۖ فَمَن لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ
مِسْكِينًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ۚ وَتِلْكَ
حُدُودُ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَلِلْكَٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

So whosoever finds it not, then a fast for two consecutive months before they touch each other ... He who declares *dhihār* against his wife and then wishes to return, but is unable to free a slave, either because his wealth is insufficient, or simply because there are no slaves, then his penance is that he fasts for two months consecutively. This means that he must fast every day for two months, without any intervening days on which he does not fast, before he and his wife can be intimate with each other.

... So whosoever is unable, then feeding sixty paupers ... And if he who declares *dhihār* against his wife and wishes to return but can neither free a slave nor fast for two months, then it is for him to feed sixty paupers, satisfying them until they are full, or, for example, by giving to each of them

at least one *modd* of wheat [one *modd* is equivalent to approximately three quarters of one kilogram].

... that ... It means the legislation of the penance for the husband who wishes to return after having made the *d͟hihār* declaration.

... is for ye to believe in Allah and His Messenger; ... This means that the purpose of this legislation is for faith to penetrate into the hearts, for the penetration of faith is only accomplished through the repeated performance of the duties. The obligations rouse the heart, and strengthen its properties.

... These are Allah's boundaries ... These penances are Allah's boundaries. 'Boundaries' is given for *ḥudūd*, meaning the limits of faith as established by Allah, glory be to Him. The believer should not depart from these limits through disobedience, just as one should not leave one's city limits in the direction of an enemy.

... and for the disbelievers is a painful chastisement. Those who deny Allah's boundaries and renounce them, have a painful chastisement before them.

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُحَآدُّونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ كُبِتُوا۟ كَمَا كُبِتَ
ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ وَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَآ ءَايَٰتٍۭ بَيِّنَٰتٍ ۚ
وَلِلْكَٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٥﴾

Verily, those who contravene Allah and His Messenger, will be subdued as those before them were subdued. And indeed We have sent down clarifying signs; And for the disbelievers is an abasing chastisement. (5)

Verily those who contravene Allah and His Messenger, ... It means those who fail to implement their commands.

... will be subdued as those before them were subdued ... Their humiliation shall be like the humiliation of the preceding generations of disbelievers and polytheists, to be achieved by the victory of Islam over them in the world, and their chastisement in the hereafter.

... And indeed We have sent down the clarifying signs; ... It means the signs and proofs. They are clear in themselves and clarify the principles of faith and the rules of the Law, so that no one can excuse himself by claiming that he did not know.

... and for the disbelievers is an abasing chastisement. Those who disbelieve in the signs will be abased and humiliated by the chastisement.

The day of the debasing chastisement is:

The day Allah raises them, all together, and then He informs them of what they have done – Allah has kept count of it while they have forgotten it; and Allah is over all things a witness. (6)

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوٓا۟ ۚ
أَحْصَىٰهُ ٱللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيدٌ
﴿٦﴾

The day Allah raises them, all together, and then He informs them of what they have done ... 'Raises' is given for *yab^{c}ath*; it means bringing to life and raising. None shall be missed that day; there is no escape for anyone from His face, glory be to Him. Allah shall inform them of all they have done, every single act [or offence] they have committed would be read out prior to their punishment, so that they shall know for what they are being punished, and will not be able to say that their punishment is wrongful.

... Allah has kept count of it ... Allah, glory be to Him, counts and records everything.

... while they have forgotten it; ... Man normally forgets the actions he has performed.

... and Allah is over all things a witness. He is present and witnesses everything a person does, and He commands His angels to record it, so that each is paid back in full on the day of resurrection.

Have thou not seen that Allah knows whatever in the skies and whatever in the earth? There is no huddle of three but that He is the fourth of them, nor five but that He is the sixth of them, and nor less than that and nor more, but that He is with them wherever they may be. Thereupon on the day of resurrection He will inform them of what they did. Indeed Allah is over all things knowing. (7)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى
ٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ مَا يَكُونُ مِن نَّجْوَىٰ ثَلَٰثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ
رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَآ أَدْنَىٰ
مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَآ أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا
كَانُوا۟ ۖ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا۟ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ ۚ إِنَّ
ٱللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

Have thou not seen ... This term means 'have thou not realised', as vision is sometimes by the eye and sometimes by the heart. The addressee is the Messenger and any intellectual.

... that Allah knows whatever in the skies and whatever in the earth?... Nothing remains hidden from Him, glory be to Him; therefore, how is it that He could be unaware of the actions of the stubborn deniers and the disbelievers? The question form is for a definite assertion, along the lines of His word, '*He informs them of what they did*' and '*Allah is over all things a witness.*'

The universality of His knowledge is then emphasised in that it encompasses even the secrets a person confides to another person in confidence:

... There is no huddle of three but that He is the fourth of them, ... 'Huddle' is given for *najwā*, meaning a confidential discussion or discourse between two or more people in seclusion from the rest of humankind. ***'He is the fourth of them'*** in the sense that He hears everything they say.

... nor five but that He is the sixth of them, ... And He hears all they say.

... and nor less than that... This means a confidential discussion or huddle between two persons.

... and nor more, ... That is, more than five of them huddled in confidential discussion.

... but that He is with them wherever they may be ... His knowledge accompanies them wherever they are in the earth, or beyond that.

... Thereupon on the day of resurrection He will inform them of what they did ... On the day of resurrection He shall have them informed of all they did in their life on earth, so as to requite them for their deeds. That is because the rewards and punishments are subsequent to their being informed, as an honour for those to be rewarded, and to humiliate those to be punished.

***... Indeed Allah is over all things knowing.*'** He knows all things and nothing remains from Him hidden.

Have thou not looked to those who were forbidden from huddling? They then return to that from which they were forbidden; and they huddle	أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ نُهُوا۟ عَنِ ٱلنَّجْوَىٰ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَيَتَنَـٰجَوْنَ بِٱلْإِثْمِ وَٱلْعُدْوَٰنِ

وَمَعۡصِيَتِ ٱلرَّسُولِۖ وَإِذَا جَآءُوكَ حَيَّوۡكَ بِمَا لَمۡ
يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ ٱللَّهُ وَيَقُولُونَ فِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ لَوۡلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا
ٱللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُۚ حَسۡبُهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ يَصۡلَوۡنَهَاۖ فَبِئۡسَ
ٱلۡمَصِيرُ ٨

together for sin and enmity and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to thee, they greet thee with a greeting by which Allah never greeted thee, saying among themselves, 'Why does Allah not chastise us for what we say?' Hell suffices them! They shall burn in it; atrocious is the destination! (8)

Have thou not looked to those who were forbidden from huddling? It is recorded from Ibn ^{c}Abbās that the āyah or portent came down concerning some Jews and hypocrites. They used to gather together in a huddle discussing matters and would wink between themselves at the believers, and would say that they could only see them being defeated or afflicted or killed by the raiders of their kin and brethren who had departed the city. This troubled the believers, and they complained to the Messenger of Allah. He forbade them from doing this, but they did not refrain, and so the āyah came down.

...They then return to that from which they were forbidden; ... That is, they did not refrain from that which they were forbidden from doing.

... and they huddle together for sin... Some of them encouraging others towards sinfulness.

... and enmity... That is, in enmity against the people and in aversion to the truth.

... and disobedience to the Messenger ... Some of them recommending others to disobey the Messenger.

And when they come to thee, ... That is, to the Messenger.

... they greet thee with a greeting by which Allah never greeted thee, ... It means that they greeted him with a greeting that appeared pleasant, but which was in reality an ugly word. The Jews would greet the Messenger by the word, *'al-Sām ^{c}alaika'*, meaning death be upon thee (*al-sām* means 'death'), whereas the impression they gave was that they had said *al-Salām ^{c}alaika,* which is "peace be upon thee". Others would use the phrases of the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, namely *an^{c}ama sabāḥan* (good morning) or *an^{c}ama masā'an* (good evening). The Messenger forbade this, and said, 'Allah has substituted better than this for us; the saying of the folk of paradise is *al-Salām ^{c}alaikum',*

meaning peace be upon you. The introductory 'Have thou not looked to' therefore affords the sense of outraged censure, and means 'Why do they do such a thing?'

... saying among themselves, ... That is, the Jews and hypocrites would say, some of them to others, or within their breasts,

... 'Why does Allah not chastise us for what we say?'... Their position was that if Muhammad was really a Messenger, then why did Allah not send upon them a chastisement; and His not doing so thus constituted a proof that he was not a Messenger.

... Hell suffices them! They shall burn in it; and atrocious is the destination! This comes in answer to their objection. The hell into which they shall be hurled on the day of resurrection is sufficient punishment for them. As for their not being chastised in the world, Allah does not punish every sinner in the world, for otherwise none would be left on the face of the earth.

O ye who believe, when ye huddle, huddle not for sin, enmity and disobedience to the Messenger. But huddle for righteousness and guardfulness; and be guardful of Allah unto whom ye will be gathered. (9)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِذَا تَنَٰجَيۡتُمۡ فَلَا تَتَنَٰجَوۡاْ
بِٱلۡإِثۡمِ وَٱلۡعُدۡوَٰنِ وَمَعۡصِيَتِ ٱلرَّسُولِ وَتَنَٰجَوۡاْ
بِٱلۡبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقۡوَىٰۖ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِيٓ إِلَيۡهِ تُحۡشَرُونَ
٩

O ye who believe, when ye huddle, ... It means 'when some of ye enter into a huddle or confidential grouping with others'.

... do not huddle for sin and enmity and disobedience to the Messenger. It means that they should not do as the Jews and hypocrites did, as given.

... But huddle for righteousness... Instead they should confidentially advise each other to do good, like one advising the other to dispense in the way of Allah.

... and guardfulness; ... Like one advising another against disobedience and towards obedience, by which means they protect themselves against the chastisement of Allah.

... and be guardful of Allah, ... That is, fear His punishments.

... unto whom ye will be gathered. That is, all are to be gathered unto His reckoning and recompense following the rising and the life of the hereafter.

Indeed huddling is from the satan, to grieve those who believe; but it is not harmful to them at all, save with the permission of Allah; and upon Allah should the believers rely. (10)

إِنَّمَا ٱلنَّجْوَىٰ مِنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ لِيَحْزُنَ ٱلَّذِينَ
ءَامَنُوا۟ وَلَيْسَ بِضَآرِّهِمْ شَيْـًٔا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

Indeed huddling is from the satan, ... That is, only the huddling that the disbelievers and the hypocrites engage in is of the satanic actions, under his direction, for he whispers into the hearts of his followers to do it, . . .

... to grieve those who believe; ... by making them (the believers) suspect that they were confiding some grievous news about them, or were arranging a plot, or were mocking the believers, or suchlike.

... but it is not harmful to them at all, ... Their secret conferences were of no harm to the believers at all, but were nothing but vain pretension.

... save with the permission of Allah; ... Allah was knowing of their confidential huddles; had it accorded to His wisdom for there to have been no intervention between them and the plots they hatched in their huddles, then it would have harmed them. But when Allah, glory be to Him, wished the believers not to be harmed, He intervened between them and what they were arranging in their huddles. Therefore, it is necessary for the believers to concentrate upon Allah with entreaties to ward off from themselves the plots of the disbelievers and the hypocrites.

... and upon Allah should the believers rely. That is, it is for them to entrust their affairs Him, glory be to Him, for what a fine protector He is!

Now that the theme has dealt with this matter of etiquette for public gatherings and assemblies, which it entered after the discussion of the lady who debated with the Messenger over her husband's declaration of dhihār to her, which itself took place in public and concerns the rules of gatherings, the theme turns to another etiquette governing public gatherings, in His word:

O ye who believe, when it is said to ye to make room in assemblies, make room; Allah will make room for ye.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا۟ فِى
ٱلْمَجَٰلِسِ فَٱفْسَحُوا۟ يَفْسَحِ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِذَا

And when it is said 'Stand up', so stand up; Allah will elevate those of ye who believe and those given knowledge, in degrees. And Allah of what ye do is informed. (11)

قِيلَ ٱنشُزُواْ فَٱنشُزُواْ يَرۡفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمۡ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَ دَرَجَٰتٖۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ خَبِيرٞ ﴿١١﴾

O ye who believe, when it is said to ye... And it makes no difference who says it.

... to make room in your assemblies, ... It means that they should gather themselves so that the space be expanded to fit others.

... then make room; Allah will make room for ye ... That is, He will make matters wide and easy for ye. It could also read that, He will give you expansive dwellings in the garden of paradise. It is related that the early Muslims used to compete to attend assemblies in the presence of Allah's Messenger, and when they saw others come to the assembly many would be niggardly about making room for others.

... And when it is said 'Stand up'... It means 'when they were asked to stand so as to let others sit'.

... stand up; ... They were to rise up and let others sit in their places. It is said that the cause of this [āyah] coming down was that the Messenger used to honour the veterans of Badr. That day (the day of the verse's revelation) the people had taken their places sitting around the Messenger and when some veterans of Badr came they did not make room for them. So the Messenger said to some of those sitting that they should stand so that the veterans of Badr could sit. They stood, but their disaffection stood out on their faces and the hypocrites sought to take advantage of the matter, saying to those who had stood, 'Is that the justice of the Messenger, that he asks ye to stand so that others may occupy your places?' And so the āyah came down.

... Allah will elevate those of ye who believe and those given knowledge, in degrees ... The reference to belief means belief that is correct and from the core. Their being raised in degrees is in the world and the hereafter. Their implementing the Messenger's command was the cause of their being raised in the world and in the hereafter. There is a good conformity between their standing from the gathering, and their degrees being raised. The degrees, given for *darajāt*, accord to the level of faith and knowledge.

... And Allah of what ye do is informed. He is informed and knowing, and requites according to all that we do.

The thread now turns to explain another aspect of the etiquette of sitting in company with the Messenger in such a way that it indicates that these etiquettes are general. We have stated that such āyāt came down to cast light upon general rules and practices, even though they had no objective embodiment after the death of the Messenger and of those who were directly related to these āyāt.

O ye who believe, when ye huddle with the Messenger, then before your huddling advance some charity; that is better for ye and purer, but if ye find not, then indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful. (12)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِذَا نَٰجَيۡتُمُ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدِّمُواْ
بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡ نَجۡوَىٰكُمۡ صَدَقَةٗۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ
وَأَطۡهَرُۚ فَإِن لَّمۡ تَجِدُواْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٌ
١٢

O ye who believe, when ye huddle with the Messenger, ... That is, when ye wish to confide something in his ear, for the verb form can have the meaning of wishing or intending, as in this verse and in the verses *'Allah wishes to remove abomination from ye...'* and *'Allah wishes for ye ease.'*

... then before your huddling advance some charity; ... The command is that before engaging the Messenger in private conversation, they should give something in charity. The nobles – by their own standards – used to come to the Messenger and engage him in private discourse about trifling matters, so as to manifest their distinction, and indeed, this practice continues in the present day. They wished to display to the people that the Messenger listened to their words and sought their views. This āyah came as a deterrent to them while at the same time this command is an honouring of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family,* a benefit for the poor, a means of preventing excessive questioning, and a means of discerning the sincere from the hypocrite, the lover of the hereafter from the lover of the world. When this āyah was heard most of the confidential questioning ceased, with the exception of Imam Ali *peace be upon him*[20], who changed a dinar into ten

---

[20] ᶜ*alayhis-salām,* or *peace be upon him.* It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of one of the prophets or the one of the impeccable Imams from the household of the Holy Prophet (the Ahl al-Bayt).

dirhams and gave a dirham in charity each time he intended to engage the Messenger in private conversation, until the ten were dispensed.

... that is better for ye... The giving of charity before entering into private conversation with the Messenger is better for the believers, as it earns them a reward, meets the obligation, proves the virtue of generosity, and honours the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

... and purer, ... It is purer because charity purifies the spirit of vices and deviation.

... but if ye find not, ... That is, if ye find nothing to give in charity before engaging the Messenger in private conversation.

... then indeed Allah is forgiving, ... He will conceal the believer’s not giving charity as commanded.

... merciful. That is, He is merciful to the believers and does not expect them to give in charity when they have nothing to give, as it was permitted for them to huddle with the Messenger without giving charity. Therefore His concealing was by His not making the giving of charity obligatory, so that it was not a sin to huddle without giving charity; and therefore there is no place for the objection ‘why does “forgiving” occur here, when essentially there is no sin to be forgiven?’

Now, when the āyah was sent down none came forward to discuss privately with the Messenger but the Imam [Ali], as stated, and so Allah lifted the ruling in His word:

Are ye worried about advancing charities before your huddle? Now that ye have not done so and Allah has turned to ye, then establish the prayer, pay the zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger; and Allah is informed of what ye do. (13)

ءَأَشْفَقْتُمْ أَن تُقَدِّمُوا۟ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ نَجْوَىٰكُمْ
صَدَقَـٰتٍ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا۟ وَتَابَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
فَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُۥ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Are ye worried... That is, worried by poverty.

... about advancing charities before your huddle?... It means before they huddle with the Messenger. ‘Charities’ comes in the plural on account of how there are many instances of it, covering many individuals, so that each individual

was to give charity. The question form is to convey indignation, meaning 'how is it ye leave aside this virtue for fear of poverty, when ye know that the charity is not defined, and that a little of it suffices?!'

... Now since ye have not done so ... It means when charity is not given, and when huddling is left aside in miserly aversion to dispensing.

... and Allah has turned to ye, ... It means that He pardons their shortcomings with regard to this virtue.

... then ... This indicates that they should continue to implement the rest of the commands of Islam, for the present ruling has been lifted from them, so that thereafter there was no reason for them not to huddle with the Messenger without giving charity.

... establish the prayer, pay the zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger; ... It means to obey them in all their other commands.

... and Allah is informed of what ye do. He sees and is informed of all; therefore it is for us not to disobey His commands and render ourselves deserving of punishment.

Amir-al-Mu'minin[21] (meaning Commander of the Believers), Imam Ali, *peace be upon him*, has said that there is an āyah to which none acted before him and to which none acted after him: ***'O ye who believe, when ye huddle with the Messenger . . .*** He said, 'I had one dinar and so I changed it for ten dirhams, and then whenever I wished to huddle with the Messenger I preceded it with a dirham.'

His word ***'Are ye worried ...'*** does not run counter to their being no cases of abrogation within the sacred Qur'an, for apparently the order of preceding huddling with charity as conveyed in the previous āyah, was a test similar to the vision of Abraham (Ibrāhīm), *peace be upon him*, [37:*100-107*] so as to manifest the distinction of Imam Ali, *peace be upon him* – so say the deniers of abrogation.

In keeping with the preceding matter of huddling, the theme now turns to explain the matter of honouring secrets, and not exposing them to the enemy:

---

[21] On instructions from Almighty Allah, the Prophet Muhammad granted the title 'Amir al-Mu'minīn' exclusively to Imam Ali.

Have thou not looked to those who befriend a people against whom Allah is angry? They are not of ye and not of them; and they swear in falsehood, knowingly. (14)

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا۟ قَوْمًا غَضِبَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مَّا هُم مِّنكُمْ وَلَا مِنْهُمْ وَيَحْلِفُونَ عَلَى ٱلْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

Have thou not looked... The address is to the Messenger, and/or to every listener.

... to those who befriend a people against whom Allah is angry? 'a people' means the disbelievers. In *Majma[c] al-Bayān*, it is reported that the reference is to a party of hypocrites who befriended the Jews and revealed to them the believers' secrets.

... They are not of ye and not of them; ... Those hypocrites were members neither of the community of the believers, nor of the community of the disbelievers, but were forever dithering between the two parties.

... and they swear in falsehood, knowingly. When criticised for their hypocrisy they would swear falsely that they were not hypocrites and were not revealing secrets to the disbelievers. And they did this knowing that their oaths were false and that they were indeed hypocrites.

Allah has prepared for them a severe chastisement; indeed, evil is what they do! (15)

أَعَدَّ ٱللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

Allah has prepared for them a severe chastisement; ... It means for the hypocrites – in the form of shame and disgrace in the world, and punishment and the fire in the hereafter.

... indeed, evil is what they do!' In reference to their hypocrisy and befriending the enemies of Allah.

They take their oaths as a shield and then bar from the way of Allah; so theirs is an abasing chastisement. (16)

ٱتَّخَذُوٓا۟ أَيْمَـٰنَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا۟ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿١٦﴾

They take their oaths as a shield... It means that the hypocrites who swore those oaths did so to protect and shield themselves from censure and blame whenever their hypocrisy manifested.

... and then bar from the way of Allah; ... It means that they prevented themselves, and also those of the people weak in faith, from the path that leads to His being content with them.

... so theirs is an abasing chastisement. Humiliation and degradation is the reward of their hypocrisy.

Neither their wealth and nor their children shall ever repel from them anything (that is) from Allah; they are companions of the fire; they are in it eternal: (17)

لَّن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَٰلُهُمْ وَلَآ أَوْلَٰدُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ
شَيْـًٔا ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ
١٧

Neither their wealth and nor their children shall ever repel from them anything (that is) from Allah ... Neither the wealth they had amassed nor the sons they had to succeed them were of the slightest benefit to them against the fury of Allah and His punishments. None of the chastisement of Allah against them can be deflected.

... they are companions of the fire; ... Those hypocrites are bound to the fire like one companion sticks to another.

... they are in it eternal. ' They are there forever.

It is related that the verses came down about a hypocrite who would assemble with the Jews, and take from them hypocritically. When the Messenger was informed of it he forbade him, but he said to the Messenger that he was only learning from them the description of him (the Messenger) from the Torah. He swore this falsely in order to conceal the truth of what he had been doing. But the revelation humiliated him and manifested the truth.

The hypocrites will be companions of the fire on

The day Allah raises them altogether and they swear to Him as they swore to ye, and they reckon that they are on to something. But no! Indeed, they are the ones who are the liars! (18)

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُۥ كَمَا
يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ ۚ أَلَآ
إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ ٱلْكَٰذِبُونَ ١٨

The day Allah raises them... They will be brought to life after their deaths for the account and recompense.

... altogether... It is given for *jamīʿan*, emphasising that none shall be overlooked, and none can imagine that he shall escape, for in the world it is normal for some people through lack of information or forgetfulness not to be covered by some general law or suchlike.

... and they shall swear to Him... It means that in the next world they shall swear to Allah, glory be to Him, that they were believers in the world.

... as they swore to ye, ... That is, while supposing that Allah is not knowing of everything about them, and that they could dupe Him about their lying simply by swearing an oath.

... and they reckon that they are on to something ... It means that they shall suppose that their false oath will be effective for them, just as it was effective in the world.

But no! Indeed, they are the ones who are the liars!' They are false both in their words and their oaths; their false oath shall not benefit them there, rather they shall be known as liars and deceivers. 'they are the ones' is given for *hum*, which is used for emphasis, and to distinguish them from amongst others.

The devil has over-powered them and has made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Those are the faction of the devil. Yea! Indeed, the faction of the devil are the losers. (19)

ٱسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلشَّيْطَـٰنُ فَأَنسَىٰهُمْ ذِكْرَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ ٱلشَّيْطَـٰنِ ۚ أَلَآ إِنَّ حِزْبَ
ٱلشَّيْطَـٰنِ هُمُ ٱلْخَـٰسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

The devil has over-powered them and has made them forget the remembrance of Allah… The devil has overcome and possessed those hypocrites, and made them forget the remembrance of Allah – and in remembering Him not, they fear Him not, and therefore they would not be taken out of hypocrisy and disobedience.

...Those are the faction of the devil ... They are his group, his followers.

... Yea! Indeed, the faction of the devil, they are the losers. They lose both their world and their hereafter: their world departs and in the hereafter they have but the fire.

The theme now turns from the hypocrites to all who oppose Allah and His Messenger:

Indeed those who contravene Allah and His Messenger, those are among the most abject. (20)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُحَآدُّونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥٓ أُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ فِى ٱلْأَذَلِّينَ ۝٢٠

Indeed those who contravene Allah and His Messenger, ... It means those who transgress His limits in opposition.

... those are among the most abject. None is more degraded and abased than them, neither in the world nor in the hereafter. So those opponents during the time of the Messenger or after that are included among them. They were more humiliated and debased than the disobedient believers, and more humiliated and debased than the disbelievers who do not oppose Allah and His Messenger.

Do those opponents think that their efforts will lead to their success, and to the failure of Islam? Never, for certainly:

Allah has written that 'I and My Messengers shall definitely overcome'; indeed Allah is Strong, Mighty. (21)

كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا۠ وَرُسُلِىٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَوِىٌّ عَزِيزٌ ۝٢١

Allah has written... He has written it upon the 'Protected Tablet' (*lawḥ al-maḥfu<u>dh</u>*).

... that 'I and My Messengers shall definitely overcome,'... It means that Allah and His Messengers shall certainly prevail against all opponents. And the world has proven the truth of this word, for those leading the world, even in these wrongful days, are the Messengers – Moses (Mūsā), *peace be upon him*, Jesus (ᶜIsā), *peace be upon him*, and Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family.* Their followers are more than half the world's population, and their values are to some extent maintained throughout the world.

... indeed Allah is Strong, Mighty.' He is strong and able to make His Messengers victorious; grand and dominant in His authority. It is not possible for anyone to dominate him or dominate His Messengers.

It is narrated that when the Muslims saw the areas over which Allah gave them victory, they said that Allah would give them to conquer Rome and Persia. The hypocrites asked whether they supposed that Rome and Persia were like the villages and towns the Muslims had conquered. Then Allah sent down this āyah.

The theme then turns to explain the duty of the believers with regard to the disbelievers, and that they should not befriend them, no matter who they are, unlike those hypocrites who befriended the disbelievers:

Thou shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day befriending anyone who contravenes Allah and His Messenger, even if they are their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kinfolk. Those – He has written faith in their hearts and has aided them with a spirit from Him. And He enters them into gardens under which rivers flow, in them eternal. Allah is content with them and they are content with Him. Those are the faction of Allah. Yea! Indeed, the faction of Allah are the thrivers. (22)

لَّا تَجِدُ قَوۡمٗا يُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ
يُوَآدُّونَ مَنۡ حَآدَّ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَلَوۡ كَانُوٓاْ
ءَابَآءَهُمۡ أَوۡ أَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ أَوۡ إِخۡوَٰنَهُمۡ أَوۡ عَشِيرَتَهُمۡۚ
أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ ٱلۡإِيمَٰنَ وَأَيَّدَهُم
بِرُوحٖ مِّنۡهُۖ وَيُدۡخِلُهُمۡ جَنَّٰتٖ تَجۡرِي مِن تَحۡتِهَا
ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَاۚ رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنۡهُمۡ
وَرَضُواْ عَنۡهُۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ حِزۡبُ ٱللَّهِۚ أَلَآ إِنَّ حِزۡبَ
ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ ٢٢

Thou shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the last day ... It means with true, correct belief.

... befriending anyone who contravenes Allah and His Messenger, ... It means that friendship with the disbelievers cannot co-exist with faith; so whoever is a friend to the disbelievers is not a believer, even though he may manifest faith. It is said that the āyah was sent down concerning one Ḥāṭib, who wrote to the Makkans informing them of the Messenger’s setting out to conquer them, after the Messenger had forbidden them from giving out such information. When the matter was discovered, he excused himself by saying that his family were in Makkah, and that he wanted to make a favour for them in the city, so that should things go against the Muslims they would respect his influence and not harm his wife and family. The Messenger forgave him. (see Surah al-Mumtaḥanah, # 60).

... even if they are their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kinfolk. It means even if those who oppose Allah and His Messenger are the believers’ fathers, sons, brothers or kinfolk, the believers will not be in friendship with them. Thus disbelief cuts the believer’s relationship to the disbeliever, though

some forms of connection remain necessary, when the disbeliever is a believer's father or suchlike, as He says in His word about parents, '*So if the two (parents) strive that thou partner with Me that of which thou have no knowledge, obey them not, but be companionable to them in the world with honour.'* Spider (29): 9.

Those – He has written faith in their hearts ... Those believers who do not befriend the disbelievers – Allah has fixed faith in their hearts by the hidden graces, as He sees them being in the path of the truth.

... and has aided them with a spirit from Him ... It means a spirit from His direction. The committed believer finds within himself a strong spirit that binds him to the observance of the commands of Allah, glory be to Him, such that however strong the causes of disbelief may become, it is never enough to budge him.

... He enters them into gardens under which rivers flow, ... In the hereafter, they are placed in gardens under the trees and palaces of which rivers of honey and wine and milk and water flow.

... in them eternal. They remain in those gardens forever.

... Allah is content with them... He knows their firmly-embedded faith and their performing the virtuous deeds.

... and they are content with Him. They are content with the distinctions and faith while in the world, and the gardens in the hereafter.

... Those are the faction of Allah ... Those believers as described are the faction and the followers of Allah, glory be to Him, as opposed to 'the faction of the devil'.

... Yea! Indeed the faction of Allah are the thrivers. It is these believers who thrive with the good of the world and the salvation and felicity of the hereafter.

Surah al-Ḥashr (59)

'The Mustering'

سورة الحشر

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-ḥashr*, meaning 'The mustering'. Like the other Madinan surahs, it contains matters related to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. As the previous surah, 'al-Mujādilah', concluded on the topic of the two parties of the Compassionate and of the Devil, this surah opens on the theme of the faction of the Compassionate being victorious over the faction of the Devil.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah... We begin the surah in the name of the Allah, that it be as an emblem signifying the faith, and that the Muslims learn the necessity of beginning their actions in His name, glory be to Him.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He created, firstly with the act of creation, and secondly with grace, cultivation and favour.

All that is in the skies and all that is in the earth glorify to Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (1)

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿١﴾

All that is in the skies and all that is in the earth glorify to Allah; ... 'Glorify' is given for *sabbaḥa* – its meaning is to declare His absolute absence of any fault or deficiency. The meaning of 'all that is in the skies and that in the earth' includes the skies or skies and the earth themselves. They glorify Him by their existence, in that all things indicate the existence of the God and His qualities, as effects signifying their cause. Or it means that they have tongues by which they glorify Him, while we do not understand. The poet has said:

All of existence perceives, but
man is barred from perceiving their perceiving.

... and He is the Mighty, the Wise. He is the Mighty in His dominion and authority over all things; He is the Wise as all He does accords to wisdom and goodness.

(It is) He who removed those who disbelieved of the Book-folk from their habitations for the first mustering; ye did not suppose that they would leave, and they supposed that their strongholds would defend them against Allah – so Allah came to them from whence they had not reckoned, and He cast terror into their hearts; they ruined their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers; so take admonishment, O ye owners of vision. *(2)*

هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَخۡرَجَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنۡ أَهۡلِ
ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ مِن دِيَٰرِهِمۡ لِأَوَّلِ ٱلۡحَشۡرِۚ مَا ظَنَنتُمۡ
أَن يَخۡرُجُواْۖ وَظَنُّوٓاْ أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمۡ حُصُونُهُم
مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ فَأَتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَمۡ يَحۡتَسِبُواْۖ
وَقَذَفَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمُ ٱلرُّعۡبَۚ يُخۡرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُم
بِأَيۡدِيهِمۡ وَأَيۡدِى ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ فَٱعۡتَبِرُواْ يَٰٓأُوْلِى
ٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرِ ٢

(It is) He who removed those who disbelieved of the book-folk... All the Book-folk are disbelievers, but some of them believed in the Messenger and so departed from disbelief. Others did not believe in him, and they are said to have disbelieved on account of their continuance in disbelief, as we say ‘Guide us’ when we mean ‘Continue to guide us’, [as in surah al-Ḥamd, āyah 6].

Or it is on account of their being believers prior to the raising of the Messenger, as their duty was to follow their religion; then, when the Messenger came, their duty was to follow him, and those who did not became disbelievers. Those meant here are Jews of the tribe of the Bani Naḍir.

... from their habitations ... Allah helped the believers and gave them authority over the Bani Naḍir, so that they were able to drive them out.

... for the first mustering; ... ‘Mustering’ is given for *ḥashr*; it means to gather and drive from one place to another. Perhaps the first time was when the Jews were exiled from Madinah collectively, after which they were driven from other places until none of them remained within the entire Arabian peninsula. For they are a people of schemes and intrigue, and so the Messenger wanted the land to be free of them and of their scheming, so that they would not hatch plots against the new religion.

... ye did not suppose that they would leave, ... The Muslims never supposed that the Jews would depart with such speed, for what they knew of their violence and prowess.

... and they supposed that their strongholds would defend them against Allah... The Jews themselves thought that their citadels would protect them against the divine will.

... so Allah came to them... It means that they were faced by His command that their strongholds be ruined, and that they should be gripped by panic.

... from whence they had not reckoned... They had not supposed that they could be taken in the manner of fear entering their hearts and their strength being made lax and infirm, and the breaking of their determination and their valour.

... and He cast terror into their hearts; ... It means that Allah, glory be to Him, cast terror into their hearts. It happened when they saw the extent of the Muslims' forces – their own strength and determination collapsed.

... they ruin their houses with their own hands... They destroyed their homes to prevent the Muslims from benefiting from them.

... and the hands of the believers; ... The believers destroyed some of their homes in order to reach them and attack them.

... so take admonishment, O ye owners of vision. 'Owners of vision' is given for *ulil-abṣār*, literally 'possessors of visions', that is, the plural of sight. It means those having sense, or reason. They were to perceive how Allah, glory be to Him, destroys and prevails over a group who combat Him, to such an extent that they themselves destroyed that which was most valuable to them: their homes. The meaning of seeing such things is that a person sees in them their consequences.

Commentators state that these āyāt were sent down concerning the Bani Naḍir. Briefly, the story is that one of the Messenger's companions killed two men who were subject to the Islamic jurisdiction. He did so by mistake. In order to pay the compensation or 'blood-wit' (*dīyah*), the Messenger sought to raise a loan from the Bani Naḍir, a group of Jews numbering about a thousand, who lived on the outskirts of Madinah. They appeared to agree to make the loan, and invited the Messenger within their fort. The Messenger declined and instead rested against a wall of the citadel. Thereupon archangel Gabriel (Jabrā'īl) descended and informed the Messenger of Allah that they were resolved upon treachery. It was also apparent to him from their activities, for they had plotted that one of them mount the wall above where the Messenger

Allah was sitting, so as to drop a rock upon his blessed head, in the hope of killing him.

The Messenger returned to Madinah without waiting for the loan. From there he sent a message to the Bani Naḍir giving them ten days to depart from his land, on the grounds of their breaching their covenant and treachery towards him. When that time was over they had no option but to leave. However, some hypocrites urged them not to leave and promised them that they would come to their aid. So some stayed and informed the Messenger that do what he may, they would not depart. And so the Messenger went against them with a group of his companions, his banner in the hand of Imam Ali, *peace be upon him*. They surrounded the stronghold and fought to occupy their houses. The Jews withdrew from house to house, and as they withdrew the buildings they were occupying were ruined. And so, in order to cut off all their hopes, the Messenger ordered that some of their trees be cut down.

The Jews soon despaired of victory, and they sent an envoy to the Messenger of Allah seeking that he grant them permission to leave. The Messenger agreed on condition that they not take with them more of their wealth than could be carried by camel. This they refused and they continued their resistance. Then, as the siege wore them down they accepted the Messenger's condition, but as a repayment of their obstinacy the Messenger of Allah withdrew his permission for them to take with them any of their wealth. They accepted and so they left with nothing. Thus their wealth returned to Islam. With the dispersal of the Bani Naḍir the Muslims were relieved of a bitter enemy who had been plotting to eradicate Islam from the root.

And were it not that Allah wrote dispersal for them, He would have chastised them in the world; and theirs in the hereafter is the chastisement of the fire. (3)

وَلَوۡلَآ أَن كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيۡهِمُ ٱلۡجَلَآءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمۡ فِي ٱلدُّنۡيَاۖ وَلَهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ عَذَابُ ٱلنَّارِ ٣

And were it not that Allah wrote dispersal for them... It means that He ruled that they should be exiled from their place to another.

He would have chastised them in the world; ... By commanding His Messenger to kill and destroy them, as He, glory be to Him, did with the Banī Quraydhah.

... and theirs in the hereafter is the chastisement of the fire. on account of their continuance in disbelief and disobedience.

That is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger; and whosoever opposes Allah, indeed Allah is severe in retribution. (4)	ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّواْ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ ۖ وَمَن يُشَآقِّ ٱللَّهَ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلْعِقَابِ ﴿٤﴾

That ... It means their being driven from their homes, and the fire being prepared for them in the hereafter.

... is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger; ... That is, they contend against Allah and wage war against His Messenger.

... and whosoever opposes Allah, indeed Allah is severe in retribution. It means that He, glory be to Him, is ready to severely punish, for, as it is said, 'He is the Most compassionate of all compassionate ones at the station of compassion and mercy, and the Severest of punishers at the station of punishment and requital.'

And whatever palms ye cut down or ye leave standing upon their roots – it is with the permission of Allah; and that He may humiliate the perverse. (5)	مَا قَطَعْتُم مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَآئِمَةً عَلَىٰٓ أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ وَلِيُخْزِىَ ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴿٥﴾

And whatever palms ye cut down or ye leave standing upon their roots – it is with the permission of Allah . . . 'Palms' is given for *līnah*, a type of date-palm that gives a high-quality fruit, and whose leaves are useful in building. In attacking the Bani Naḍir the Muslims cut down some of their trees, and left others untouched. This troubled the Muslims, for they thought that if the cutting of trees was necessary, then allowing some to remain was not lawful, whereas if it was necessary for them to remain, then cutting some down was not lawful. Thus this āyah came down to exonerate them and settle their hearts, and to explain that as far as warfare and exemplary punishment requires trees to be cut they are to be cut, while where it is not necessary for them to be cut down they are to remain.

... and that He may humiliate the perverse. Part of the purpose for cutting those trees was that Allah wished to humiliate the 'perverse' (*al-fāsiqīn*), meaning the Jews of Bani Naḍir. They felt regret at the Muslims cutting down the trees they had planted and tended, and they also felt regret at those that were left, for thereafter the Muslims were to benefit from them.

The theme now turns to explain the ruling of the spoils taken in exiling the Bani Naḍir, in that they were the special property of the Messenger, and of his kin. This was because the Muslims had not strived to earn them – in contrast to the spoils for which the Muslims had strived, four parts of which belonged to the Muslims, one fifth belonging to the Messenger and his kin. This is because the Messenger and his kin are forbidden to receive zakāt and other charities, and so their needs were met from spoils and khums [a fifth of unspent earnings]. Certainly the Messenger of Allah required an extra share in order to carry out the management of the Muslims affairs, especially those related to government. In this way he was just like governmental ministers today, who have private budgets in order for them to carry out their duties:

And whatever Allah returns to His Messenger from them – for that ye spurred neither horse nor camel; rather Allah gives dominion to His Messengers over whom He wills, and Allah over all things is in power. (6)

وَمَآ أَفَآءَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِۦ مِنۡهُمۡ فَمَآ أَوۡجَفۡتُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ خَيۡلٖ وَلَا رِكَابٖ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُۥ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ ٦

And whatever Allah returns to His Messenger from them ... the verb 'return' is given for *afā'*, meaning the 'spoils of strife', but which originally meant 'return'. This indicates that the spoils were usurped and wrongfully in the hands of the disbelievers, and that as spoils they return to their real owners, the believers, for whom Allah created all things.

... for that ye spurred neither horse nor camel; ... The Muslims did not acquire those spoils through any victory with horse or camel, such that they would have a right to them.

... rather Allah gives dominion to His Messengers over whom He wills, ... He, glory be to Him, creates terror and despair in the hearts of the disbelievers so that the Messenger of Allah is victorious and captures their towns without warfare and without effort.

... and Allah over all things is in power. ' He is able to establish the Messengers over the disbelievers, without battle.

Now that this introduction has been laid down, that the Muslims did not strive for those spoils, the theme turns to explain the ruling itself, that the spoils were not for them, but for the Messenger and his kin:

Whatever Allah returns to His Messenger from the folk of the townships, it is for Allah and the Messenger and the kin, the orphans, the destitute, the wayfarer; that it may not circulate amongst the rich of ye. And what the Messenger grants ye, so take it; and what he forbids ye, refrain from it; and be guardful of Allah; indeed Allah is severe in retribution. (7)

مَّآ أَفَآءَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِۦ مِنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْقُرَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ
وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْيَتَـٰمَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَـٰكِينِ
وَٱبْنِ ٱلسَّبِيلِ كَىْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةًۢ بَيْنَ ٱلْأَغْنِيَآءِ
مِنكُمْ ۚ وَمَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَىٰكُمْ
عَنْهُ فَٱنتَهُوا۟ ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ
ٱلْعِقَابِ ﴿٧﴾

Whatever Allah returns to His Messenger from the folk of the townships ... It means the returns taken from the disbelievers without warfare.

... it is for Allah... those returns belong to Allah; this is a mark of honour for the Messenger, for everything belongs to Allah.

... and the Messenger... Given to him by Allah, glory be to Him.

... and the kin, ... That is, the Messenger’s family and household, his near kin. It means the purified Imams *peace be upon them* [as referred to in 33: 33].

... the orphans, the destitute, the wayfarer, ... Such returns are for the fatherless child, the pauper whose poverty renders him inactive, and he who is stranded away from home among people who know nothing of him or of his background. It is established that these are categories of the descendants of the Messenger *may Allah bless him and his family.*

The wisdom behind this allocation is then explained:

... that it may not circulate ... ‘circulate’ is given for *dawlatan*, meaning that which circulates among a particular group, firstly belonging to this one of them and then to that one.

... amongst the rich of ye ... It had been the practice during the Ignorance era that when a battle took place the spoils would be taken by the leaders; and it is clear that the rich circulate property among themselves, through their banquets to which only the rich are invited, through the sons of some marrying the daughters of others, and through their presenting their guests with gifts, and so on, so that property always moves from one leader to another, while the poor

remain deprived. The phrase 'that it may not' completes the reasoning, in that such 'spoils' can only be divided in one of three ways: they could be divided among the chiefs as during the Ignorance era; or they could be divided among the Muslims, like the spoils that they are entitled for when they partake in battle, called *ghanīmah* or spoils; or they could be allocated to the Messenger of Allah. The first is ruled out as it leads to the stockpiling of wealth among the rich; and the second is ruled out as the Muslims did not engage in a battle and did not deserve it. Therefore, only the third course remains open.

As this ruling was difficult for them, His word came down:

... And what the Messenger grants ye, so take it; and what he forbids ye, refrain from it; ... It means that the Muslims were to act according to the laws and rulings as he explained them to them.

... and be guardful of Allah, ... It means be wary of His punishment, and do not oppose Him.

... indeed Allah is severe in retribution. His retribution is severe for those who ignore His commands and prohibitions, and oppose Him. It is recorded in Majma[c] al-Bayān that some Muslim chiefs suggested to the Messenger to act as they had done during the Ignorance era by taking what you choose and leave the rest for us. Then the āyah was sent down and the companions submitted to the command of Allah and His Messenger.

He, glory be to Him, then explains the characteristics of the four groups of the Messenger's kin who are entitled to the spoils that have not been fought for. However, the characteristics that follow are no more than a rationale for the legislation at the time of the revelation. They are not permanent conditional requirements.

For the poor migrants, those driven from their homes and from their wealth seeking profusion from Allah, and His contentment, while succouring Allah and His Messenger. Those, they are the truthful. (8)

لِلْفُقَرَآءِ ٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا۟ مِن دِيَٰرِهِمْ وَأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَٰنًا وَيَنصُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥٓ ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلصَّٰدِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾

For the poor... expanding on who of 'the kin …', or 'the orphans …' and this is more fitting as it has been already established that it is not a condition that the

leader who takes the spoils should be poor; this merely describes conditions at the time of the revelation.

... migrants ... It describes their having migrated from Makkah to Madinah.

... those driven from their homes ... The disbelievers forced them out in oppression and enmity.

... and their wealth ... having left their wealth behind them.

... seeking profusion from Allah, ... They sought that Allah would bestow bounty upon them in place of the homes and wealth they had left behind them.

... and His contentment, ... They sought for Him to be content with them.

... while succouring Allah and His Messenger ... It means that they fought for Allah's religion and in front of His Messenger, in order to exalt the word of Islam.

... Those, they are the truthful. Such people are truthful in their faith, doing all that faith requires.

Having lauded the Muhājerin (emigrants), the theme now turns to laud the Anṣār (supporters), the natives of Madinah who accepted Islam, in His word:

And those who made their dwelling in The Abode and in the belief before them – they love whosoever migrates to them, and they find no need within their breasts for what they were given, and they prefer them above themselves, even though they are in desperation. And whoever is protected from the avarice of his soul – those, they are the thrivers. (9)

وَٱلَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُو ٱلدَّارَ وَٱلۡإِيمَٰنَ مِن قَبۡلِهِمۡ يُحِبُّونَ
مَنۡ هَاجَرَ إِلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمۡ
حَاجَةٗ مِّمَّآ أُوتُواْ وَيُؤۡثِرُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ وَلَوۡ
كَانَ بِهِمۡ خَصَاصَةٞۚ وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفۡسِهِۦ
فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ ٩

And those who made their dwelling in the abode... 'The Abode' of the Hijrah (migration) meaning the holy city of Madinah.

... and in the belief ... Faith is like a dwelling or home, in that it is adopted by a person to relax within it and constantly return to it, so that whatever affair engages a person he turns to the belief for inspiration as to how to deal with it.

Or it may be that the word ‘adopt’ is latent, so that the reading would be ‘and adopt the faith’.

... before them ... It means before the migration of the Migrants (the Muhājerīn) to Madinah, for it was before the migration that the people of Madinah believed (in the Message of the Prophet).

... they love whosoever migrates to them, ... That is, from Makkah and the other towns and cities of disbelievers. The sense is that just as the migrants are laudable for the reasons previously given, so too the Anṣār are to be lauded for loving the migrants.

... and they find no need within their breasts for what they were given, ... It means that the Anṣār were not envious of the migrants’ being given the spoils of Bani Naḍir by the Messenger of Allah.

... and they prefer them above themselves, ... That is, the Anṣār prefer to house and do good to the migrants, and they think of them before they think of themselves.

... even though they are in desperation ... The Anṣār preferred the Migrants’ needs over their own, and such persons are greater in reward than those who dispense in charity from a position of wealth.

... And whoever is protected from the avarice of his soul ... It means those who are able, with the grace of Allah, glory be to Him, to guard against the miserliness and selfishness of his soul.

... those, they are the thrivers. They are at the lofty levels of success.

Having lauded the Migrants and the Anṣār, their followers in goodness until the end of time are lauded, in His word:

And those who came after them, saying, ‘O Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in belief, and put not rancour in our hearts for those who believe. Our Lord, indeed Thou are Kind, Merciful.’ (10)

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَآءُو مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
ٱغۡفِرۡ لَنَا وَلِإِخۡوَٰنِنَا ٱلَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِٱلۡإِيمَٰنِ
وَلَا تَجۡعَلۡ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلّٗا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ رَبَّنَآ
إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٞ رَّحِيمٌ ١٠

And those who came after them, ... It means those who accept Islam after the Migrants and Anṣār; whose words, which show their strong and deep rooted belief, are:

... saying 'O Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in belief, ... They ask forgiveness for their sins and for their brothers of the Migrants, the Anṣār and others who preceded them in belief.

...and put not rancour in our hearts for those who believe ... 'Rancour' is given for *ghall*, meaning hatred, bitterness, spite. 'Those who believe' means the believers of the past and present. The term 'and put not' (*lā taj*ᶜ*al)* shows that grace is from Him, glory be to Him, and when His grace is not forthcoming for a person that person becomes prone to enmity and bitterness. Thus, they are saying, 'Do not leave us to ourselves, for then the devil and our souls will overcome us, and then our souls will become subject to rancour.'

...Our Lord, indeed Thou are kind, merciful.' He is kind and merciful to the servants. This prayer teaches the believers the correct attitude towards those who preceded them in faith, and towards their contemporaries.

With this lauding of the believers and the explanation of their position, the theme now turns to clarify something of the position of the hypocrites in His word:

Have thou not looked to those who engage in hypocrisy? They say to their brothers, those of the Book-folk who disbelieve, 'If they send ye forth, we will definitely go forth with ye, and we will never obey anyone concerning ye, and if ye are fought, we will definitely succour ye.' And Allah testifies that they are liars. (11)

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا۟ يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَٰنِهِمُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ مِنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِن قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ وَٱللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَٰذِبُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Have thou not looked to those who engage in hypocrisy? ... The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger, or to the listener. The question form is to convey outrage. 'Engage in hypocrisy' is given for *nāfaqu*, meaning to do hypocrisy; that is, manifesting belief while holding disbelief within.

... They say to their brothers, those of the Book-folk who disbelieve, ... That is, to their brothers in disbelief, the Jews who disbelieved in the Messenger of Islam. It means the Jews of Bani Naḍir.

... If they send ye forth, we will definitely go forth with ye, ... They (the hypocrites) promised that if the Messenger deported them (i.e. the Jews), they would leave their homes with them.

... and we will never obey anyone concerning ye, ... By 'anyone' they meant the Messenger of Allah. They meant that if they were ordered to fight them they would disobey, and would not fight them.

... and if ye are fought, we will definitely succour ye ... They promised that if the Messenger and the Muslims were to wage war against them, they would definitely come to their assistance and fight with them against the Messenger and the Muslims.

... And Allah testifies that they are liars. It means that Allah testifies that the hypocrites were lying to them and that their promises were false; they would not go forth with Bani Naḍir and they would not fight with them. It is said that ᶜAbdullah ibn Ubayy was urging the Jews towards resistance and war against the Messenger, and so made these false promises to them. And it turned out just as Allah had said, for when the time came for action it became clear that he had been lying.

If they are driven out, they will definitely not go forth with them, and if they are fought, they will definitely not succour them, and even if they succoured them, they would definitely turn their backs; and then they would not be succoured. (12)

لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا۟ لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِن قُوتِلُوا۟ لَا
يَنصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِن نَّصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ ٱلْأَدْبَٰرَ ثُمَّ
لَا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

If they are driven out, ... That is, if the Messenger of Allah were to drive out the Bani Naḍir.

... they will definitely not go forth with them, ... It means that the hypocrites would not share their exile with them.

... and if they are fought, they will definitely not succour them, ... That is, if the Muslims were to fight the Bani Naḍir, the hypocrites would not come to their aid.

... and even if they succoured them ... Supposing the impossible …

... they would definitely turn their backs,.. They would not fight with them against the Messenger and the Muslims but would hand them over on a plate to be vanquished.

... and then they would not be succoured. It means that even supposing that the hypocrites remained with them and did not turn their backs, still the Jews would not be rescued, for the hypocrites were too few and too weak to resist the Messenger and the Muslim forces.

The theme then explains that the hypocrites had the greatest fear for the Muslims; how then would they support the Jews against them?

Ye arouse greater dread in their breasts than Allah; that is because they are a people not understanding. (13)	لَأَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Ye arouse greater dread in their breasts... The Muslims were greatly feared by the hypocrites and by the Jews. They feared them ‘in their breasts’ as the breast is the housing of the heart, and it is the heart that is the home of the soul, which is what feels fear and security.

... than Allah; ... They feared the Muslims more than they feared Allah, glory be to Him, for they saw the Muslims while they didn’t see Allah. For faith has not been firmly established in their hearts so that they would fear Him.

... that is because they are a people not understanding. They feared the Muslims more than they feared Allah because they failed to think, to reflect and so failed to realise His magnificence, glory be to Him.

He then explains, glory be to Him, that the Jews’ fighting the Muslims is unlike any other war, for in the severity of their fear of the Muslims and their lack of unity the Jews would not dare to fight them out in the open. Thus the Muslims were given courage for the fight:

They will not fight ye together save in fortified towns, or from behind walls. Their fighting among themselves is severe; thou would think them together but their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a people not reasoning. (14)	لَا يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِن وَرَآءِ جُدُرٍۭ ۚ بَأْسُهُم بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ ۚ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

They will not fight ye together... Those Jews would not unite to fight the Muslims. This is to reflect their essential weakness, in that even all of them together would not fight against the Muslims save in the manner that follows. Or 'they' means the Jews and the hypocrites, and 'together' is for emphasis.

... save in fortified towns, or from behind walls. They would not fight against the Muslims save from fortified, secure positions, or from behind walls so that they could pelt the Muslims with missiles and rocks and suchlike.

... Their fighting among themselves is severe; ... They bear enmity between themselves, the one for the other. They are disunited and cannot cooperate. Therefore their hearts are divided and they have not the courage to fight against the Muslims.

... thou would think them ... O Messenger, or O reader.

... together ... Anyone might imagine them united.

... but their hearts are diverse ... They are not at all united.

... That is because they are a people not reasoning. They do not think about what is good for them and what is harmful. All that is said is true of whoever fails to reflect, but it is true of the Jews in particular for two reasons. First, that they reckon themselves to be Allah's chosen people. Second, their lust for material things. Unity and the other virtues are born of humility and the exercise of spirituality in all affairs, but when someone believes himself to be chosen he puts himself above others, and this breeds disunity, and when a person dedicates himself to the material things, he fails to purify his soul, so that it cannot become the source of goodness and virtue. In the course of history we see that the Jews are either aggressors or persecuted. When they are able they transgress until comes along who would hunt them and so on.

كَمَثَلِ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِهِمۡ قَرِيبًاۖ ذَاقُواْ وَبَالَ
أَمۡرِهِمۡ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٞ ١٥

Like those closely before them: they tasted the mischief of their affair, and theirs is a painful chastisement. (15)

Like those closely before them ... Bani Naḍir were like those closely before them, the Banī Qaynaqā[c]. They too had breached their pact with the Messenger so he ordered them to depart.

... they tasted the mischief of their affair, ... They tasted the evil consequences of their actions.

... and theirs is a painful chastisement. In the hereafter. ᶜAbdullah ibn Ubayy the hypocrite had promised to fight with them, but did not do so – just as he deceived the Bani Naḍir and deserted them when it was their turn to face the Muslim forces.

Like the devil when he says to the human, 'Disbelieve!' Then when he disbelieves, he says, 'Indeed I renounce thee; for I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds!' (16)

كَمَثَلِ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ ٱكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّى بَرِىٓءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّىٓ أَخَافُ ٱللَّهَ رَبَّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

Like the devil ... The example of ibn Ubayy is like the devil in his deceiving man and then forsaking him and leaving him to the chastisement of Allah.

... when he says to the human, "Disbelieve!" ... The devil says this by suggestion (*waswās*) and by making disbelief seem beautiful to man, so that man obeys the devil and disbelieves.

Then when he disbelieves, ... When man disbelieves and opposes Him, glory be to Him, in such wise that he deserves His chastisement,

... he says, "Indeed I renounce thee; ... The devil tells the disbeliever that he will not help him nor will he rescue him from the chastisement of Allah.

... for I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds! Can one who is terrified come to the aid of another? Thus did Ibn Ubayy deceive Bani Naḍir and Bani Qaynaqāᶜ into opposing the Messenger, for he did not support them but deserted them.

And the destiny of them both is that they are in the fire, eternal in it – that is the recompense of the wrongful. (17)

فَكَانَ عَٰقِبَتَهُمَآ أَنَّهُمَا فِى ٱلنَّارِ خَٰلِدَيْنِ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَٰٓؤُا۟ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

And the afterlife of them both ... That is, the devil and the human he has deceived into disbelief.

... is that they are in the fire, eternal in it ... They both deserve the fire, and shall meet the chastisement, the one for his deception, the other for his disbelief.

***... that is the recompense of the wrongful.*'** Such an afterlife is the reward of those who are wrongful to themselves with disbelief due to the deception of the devil.

O ye who believe! Be guardful of Allah, and a soul should look at what it has sent on for tomorrow. And be guardful of Allah; indeed Allah is knowing of what ye do. (18)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَلۡتَنظُرۡ نَفۡسٞ مَّا قَدَّمَتۡ لِغَدٖۖ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرُۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ ١٨

O ye who believe, be guardful of Allah ... That is, fear His punishments; do not neglect His commands. The address is made particularly to the believers, as it is they who will benefit from such an address; otherwise, to be guardful and virtuous in this way is necessary for everyone.

... and a soul should look at ... It means that everyone should regard and think about:

... what it has sent on for tomorrow ... That is, for the day of resurrection: has it prepared virtue or corruption? reward or punishment? The meaning is that it is necessary to send ahead the beautiful things, for whatever deeds a person performs will be seen by him on the day of resurrection.

... And be guardful of Allah, ... do not disobey His commands and prohibitions.

... indeed Allah is knowing of what ye do. He is informed of our actions and on the morrow will requite us for them.

And be not like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget themselves; those, they are the perverse. (19)

وَلَا تَكُونُواْ كَٱلَّذِينَ نَسُواْ ٱللَّهَ فَأَنسَىٰهُمۡ أَنفُسَهُمۡۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡفَٰسِقُونَ ١٩

And be not like those who forget Allah, ... The address is to the believers, meaning that they should not, like the Book-folk, who believed (in Allah) and then forgot Him by disobeying Him. The meaning is not actual forgetfulness, but rather abandoning His commands, for he who is aware (of his duties and responsibilities) but abandons them is like he who forgets, in that both fail to implement the commands.

... so He makes them forget themselves; ... It means that Allah makes those who forget Him such that they do not act for their salvations, like the person who forgets himself and so pays no attention to his condition.

... those, they are the perverse. They are perverse for they are outside the realm of obedience to Allah, the Most High.

Are those who enter the fire due to their disbelief and disobedience equal to those who enter the garden in reward for their faith and acting virtuously? Never!

Not equal are the companions of the fire and the companions of the garden; for indeed the companions of the garden are the thrivers. (20)

لَا يَسْتَوِىٓ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ وَأَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْجَنَّةِ ۚ
أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْجَنَّةِ هُمُ ٱلْفَآئِزُونَ ٢٠

Those who are forever in the fire are not equal to those who remain eternally in the garden; these latter accomplish the achievement of being rewarded and saved.

How is it that the disbelievers have no fear about the Qur’an, and do not believe in He who sent it, whereas had the Qur’an been sent down to a mountain it would have feared? So where a solid mountain fears, the harsh heart fears not: ‘They are like stones, or worse in harshness’:

Had We sent this Qur’an down upon a mountain, thou would have seen it humbled, split asunder from fear of Allah. And such metaphors We strike for humankind that they might deliberate. (21)

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُۥ
خَٰشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ
ٱلْأَمْثَٰلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ
٢١

Had We sent this Qur’an down upon a mountain, ... If the Qur’an had been addressed to a mountain with the expectation that it would put it into action,

... thou would have seen it humbled, ... Thou, O Messenger of Allah, or the reader would have seen the mountain to be frightened and submissive.

... split asunder from fear of Allah. This means either in reality, considering that the mountains (earth, etc.) perceive although we do not know how they do so, as He says, *‘O mountains, sing praises with him’* [34:10] and *‘. . . (Heavens*

and Earth) said we come in willing obedience' [41:11] and *'There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise.'* [17:44] and *'. . . and they (Heavens and Earth) were afraid of it...'* [33:72]. Or it is a figurative usage to denote the power of penetration and influence within the Qur'an, such that it would make mountains fear and would shatter them, thus implying the question of why the human being does not fear?

...And such metaphors ... This particular similitude, and other metaphors *(amthāl),* bring closer to the mind's eye the sacred Qur'an's magnificence and importance.

...We strike for humankind that they might deliberate. It means for them to reflect about that which the metaphors represent.

The theme now turns to clarify a number of Allah's attributes, glory be to Him, so as to explain that all humility is to be for Him, glory be to Him, just as the mountain is humbled by His word:

He is Allah who – there is no god but Him, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed; He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. (22)

هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ عَٰلِمُ ٱلْغَيْبِ
وَٱلشَّهَٰدَةِ ۖ هُوَ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٢٢﴾

He is Allah who – there is no god but Him, ... It means that in the whole of existence none have a say but Him, and none is rightfully worshipped but Him, alone, without partner.

... Knower of the unseen and the witnessed; ... He knows all things, whether they are hidden from the senses like the angels and the jinn and suchlike, or whether the senses perceive them, like the sensory things. It is narrated from Imam al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him*, that: 'The unseen is that which has not yet come to pass, while the witnessed is that which has already come to pass.'

... He is the Compassionate, ... His mercy embraces the entire creation.

... the Merciful. He graces the believers. Thus His knowledge is the knowledge of one who is compassionate and merciful, not of one who is cold, harsh and severe.

He is Allah – there is no god but Him, the King, the Holy, the Safety, the Secure, the Authority, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Sublime; glorified be

هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱلْقُدُّوسُ
ٱلسَّلَٰمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُ ٱلْمُهَيْمِنُ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْجَبَّارُ

Allah of that which they partner. (23)	ٱلۡمُتَكَبِّرُۚ سُبۡحَٰنَ ٱللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُونَ ٢٣

He is Allah – there is no god but Him, ... The repetition serves the purpose of driving the point home in opposition to the worshippers of idols, naturalists and suchlike.

... the King, ... It is given for *al-malik*, meaning the absolute sovereign lord over all existence.

... the Holy, ... He is pure of all forms of shortcoming, impurity, fault and ugliness.

... the Safety, ... It is given for *al-salām*, meaning that existence is safe from Him, glory be to Him, in that He is not like those rulers who harm their subjects and their lands. Also it means that He is safe from all faults, such that He is safety itself.

... the Secure, ... It is given for *al-mu'min*, meaning that His creation is safe and tranquil, as He does it not the slightest harm. Also it means that He bestows faith. Or it means that He has a bond to creation just as the Faithful has a bond to the Creator, for faith is fundamentally the bond to something.

... the Authority, ... It is given for *al-muhaymin*, meaning that He has authority over the creation.

... the Mighty, ... It is given for *al-ᶜazīz*, meaning that He is absolute in His sovereignty, or rare in His being while His benefits to others are many. Of this Allah is the clearest embodiment, for He is one, alone, while the whole of existence is in need of Him, glory be to Him.

... the Compeller, ... It means that He overcomes resistance; or that He compels other than Him, as all of existence is compelled by Him, glory be to Him.

... the Sublime; ... He elevates and grandifies Himself above all that would lead to a shortcoming or fault.

***... glorified be Allah of that which they partner.*'** It means that He is pure and holy of all that the idolaters and polytheists say of Him having partners and suchlike.

He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner – His are the beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth glorify to Him; and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (24)

هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡخَٰلِقُ ٱلۡبَارِئُ ٱلۡمُصَوِّرُۖ لَهُ ٱلۡأَسۡمَآءُ ٱلۡحُسۡنَىٰۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُۥ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِۖ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ ٢٤

He is Allah ... To Him all the beautiful names and attributes of perfection apply, for 'Allah' is the proper name of that being to which they all apply.

... the Creator, ... It is given for *al-khāliq*, meaning that He determined the existence of every thing.

... the Originator, ... It is given for *al-bāri'*, meaning that He executes the determining of all things by causation.

... the Fashioner; ... It is given for *al-muṣawwir*, meaning that He fashions everything that exists into a particular form. A thing needs to be decided upon, and designed, before being created, then it needs to be taken from the stage of potentiality to that of existence, and then that thing needs to be given a particular shape, or form.

... His are the beautiful names ... He is the Knowing rather than the ignorant, the Powerful rather than the incapable, the Generous rather than the miserly, and so on. His are all the beautiful names.

... Whatever is in the heavens and on earth glorify to Him; ... They declare His purity of all faults, shortcomings and ugliness. They do this by their existence, or in accordance with their perceptions.

... and He is the Mighty, ... He is the Mighty (*al-ᶜazīz*) in His sovereignty.

... the Wise. He does nothing in vain, but according to wisdom and the best interests.

Surah al-Mumtaḥanah (60) سورة الممتحنة

'The Examined Woman'

The surah derives its name from the term *famtahinuhunna*, meaning 'examine them (women)'. Like the other Madinan surahs, it is concerned with the Islamic order, along with some points related to the beliefs and faith. As the preceding surah, 'al-Ḥashr', concluded on the theme of Allah's positive attributes, in order to forestall man from taking other than Him, the Most High, as Lord, owner and God, so this surah opens on the theme of not taking the enemies of Allah as friends.

The sending down of these verses was prompted by Ḥāṭib ibn Abi Balta[c]ah, who had accepted Islam and migrated to Madinah, while his family remained at Makkah. Fearing that the Messenger was about to attack them, some members of the Quraysh approached Ḥāṭib's family and asked them to write to Ḥāṭib and ask him to find out whether the Messenger intended to march on Makkah. It was indeed the Messenger's intention to liberate Makkah, and Ḥāṭib wrote to his family telling them of the Messenger's intention. He gave the letter to a woman called Ṣafiyyah, who hid it in her hair, under her plaids, and departed for Makkah. Then archangel Gabriel (Jabrā'īl) came down and informed the Messenger about it, and he in turn sent Ali, *peace be upon him*, and Zubair ibn al-[c]Awwām in search of her. They caught up with her and Ali, *peace be upon him*, demanded the letter from her. She said to him that she had no such letter. So they searched her belongings and found nothing. Zubair thought they had done enough, but Ali said, 'No, by Allah, we shall not belie Allah's Messenger, and Allah's Messenger does not belie Gabriel, and Gabriel does not belie Allah, majestic is His praise. Addressing Ṣafiyyah, Imam Ali *peace be upon him* said, By Allah, if you do not manifest the letter, I shall despatch thy head to Allah's Messenger.' Seeing that Amir-al-Mu'minin was in such earnest, she said to him, 'Turn away from me, O Ali, and I will bring it out.'

So she brought the letter out from under her hair, and the Imam took it to the Messenger. He summoned Ḥāṭib and said to him, 'O Ḥāṭib, what is this?'

Ḥāṭib swore in reply that he was not a hypocrite and had not deserted Islam, and he testified to the Unity and the Messengership, and said that his family were in Makkah and they had been treated well by the Quraysh, and so he wanted to reward the Quraysh for their kindness. One of those present rose seeking to behead Ḥāṭib, and asked permission from Allah's Messenger to do

that, but Ḥāṭib beseeched the Messenger and the Messenger forgave him and ordered the man to let Ḥāṭib go. The āyāt then came down warning the Muslims against such a thing happening again.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah ... We begin in the name of the God to whom belongs the whole of existence, who is deserving of the whole of praise. 'Allah' is the proper name of that Essence – Is there any more deserving than Allah, the Most High, of our beginning in his name? The mention of His name, instead of saying 'In Allah' (or 'By Allah') is due to respect, which makes it necessary to mention the name, rather than mentioning the Essence Itself.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful.. His mercy embraces all things; He has a particular mercy for the believers, which is why it is said that His name 'the Merciful' (*al-Raḥīm*) signifies His special mercy upon the believers.

O ye who believe, take not My enemies and your enemies as friends, offering them love while they reject the truth that has come to ye, driving out the Messenger and yourselves because ye believe in Allah, your Lord, if ye have gone forth striving in My way and reaching for My contentment. Ye confide unto them in affection, and I am more knowing what ye conceal and what ye manifest. And whosoever of ye who does it – he has definitely strayed from the path's evenness. (1)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَتَّخِذُواْ عَدُوِّى
وَعَدُوَّكُمۡ أَوۡلِيَآءَ تُلۡقُونَ إِلَيۡهِم بِٱلۡمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدۡ
كَفَرُواْ بِمَا جَآءَكُم مِّنَ ٱلۡحَقِّ يُخۡرِجُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ
وَإِيَّاكُمۡ ۙ أَن تُؤۡمِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ رَبِّكُمۡ إِن كُنتُمۡ خَرَجۡتُمۡ
جِهَٰدًا فِى سَبِيلِى وَٱبۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِى ۚ تُسِرُّونَ
إِلَيۡهِم بِٱلۡمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا۠ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَآ أَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَآ
أَعۡلَنتُمۡ ۚ وَمَن يَفۡعَلۡهُ مِنكُمۡ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ
ٱلسَّبِيلِ ۝١

O ye who believe, take not My enemies and your enemies as friends, ... It means that those who oppose Allah by their disbelief and disobedience, and who oppose the believers through mockery and bloodshed and the other forms of enmity, are not to be given friendship and support.

... offering them love... They are not to be given love and amity in the way of a lover for the beloved, as Ḥāṭib behaved towards the people of Makkah who were the enemies of Allah and of the Muslims.

... while they reject the truth that has come to ye ... Such enemies disbelieved in Islam and the Qur'an and the Messenger.

... driving out the Messenger and yourselves ... … from your homeland. The Makkans had driven the Messenger and the Muslims from their land, for the reason that:

... because ye believe in Allah, your Lord ... Is it normal to befriend those who have driven ye from your homes on account of your believing in Allah?

... if ye have gone forth striving in My way ... It means: if ye went out from your homes for the purpose of jihad in the path of Allah.

... and reaching for My contentment ... That is, seeking the satisfaction of Allah with yourselves. It means that if the purpose behind leaving your homes and migrating was your seeking the divine satisfaction, then do not befriend those who are the enemies of Allah, and your own enemies, like the people of Makkah.

... Ye confide unto them in affection, ... It means that you inform them in secret communication between yourselves and them, out of love and affection.

... And ... Do ye suppose that such deeds are hidden from Allah? Never, for …

... I am more knowing ... That is, He knows better than all others, even than yourselves.

... of what ye conceal and what ye manifest ... It means the secrets in your affairs and what is apparent in them, for nothing is hidden from Allah, and everything you do shall be requited.

... And whosoever of ye who does it ... It refers to whoever of the believers maintains such a secret affection.

... he has definitely strayed from the path's evenness.' He has deviated from the path of truth towards destruction. The path's 'evenness' *(sawā')* means the centre of it.

If they encountered ye they would be enemies to ye, stretching out their hands and their tongues against ye in evil; and would love it were ye to disbelieve. (2)

إِن يَثْقَفُوكُمْ يَكُونُواْ لَكُمْ أَعْدَآءً وَيَبْسُطُوٓاْ إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُم بِٱلسُّوٓءِ وَوَدُّواْ لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

If they encountered ye... It means: were the disbelievers of Makkah to encounter the Muslims in war.

... they would be enemies to ye, ... They would assail the Muslims, which is the action of an enemy towards his enemy. The āyah repudiates Ḥāṭib's idea that the Makkans were friendly towards him, explaining that their show of affection was no more than a show, with no real substance.

... stretching out their hands and their tongues against ye in evil; ... That is, against the believers, their hands in enmity and war, their tongues in defamation and abuse. It means that they would not miss any opportunity to harm the Muslims.

... and would love it were ye to disbelieve. Those disbelievers would love for the Muslims to disbelieve in Allah as they themselves disbelieved; therefore one's family should not cause one to befriend such disbelievers, for . . .

Neither your relatives will benefit ye nor your children; on the day of resurrection He shall separate ye. And Allah is an observer of what ye do. (3)

لَن تَنفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَآ أَوْلَٰدُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣﴾

Neither your relatives will profit ye nor your children; ... It means that one should not let the protection of family and children become the cause of opposition to Allah and the Messenger through befriending the disbelievers, like Ḥāṭib who, in seeking to protect his family in Makkah, opposed the Messenger by writing to the disbelievers, informing them of the intention of the Messenger to march on Makkah.

... on the day of resurrection He shall separate ye ... He shall place the faith-folk in the garden, and the disbelief-folk and disobedience into the fire. Therefore do not commit those deeds that lead to the fire.

... And Allah is an observer of what ye do. Since Allah sees everything we do, there is no point in doing what will lead to His anger and punishments.

Indeed, there was for ye a fine example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: 'Indeed we renounce ye and what ye worship instead of Allah. We disbelieve in ye, and between us and ye enmity and hatred have appeared, forever, until ye believe in Allah alone', except the word of Abraham to his father: 'I shall seek forgiveness for thee, and I have no right upon Allah for thee'. 'Our Lord! Upon Thee we rely; to Thee we turn; and unto Thee is the destiny.' (4)

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِىٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَٱلَّذِينَ
مَعَهُۥٓ إِذْ قَالُوا۟ لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءَٰٓؤُا۟ مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا
تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَكُمُ ٱلْعَدَٰوَةُ وَٱلْبَغْضَآءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنُوا۟
بِٱللَّهِ وَحْدَهُۥٓ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ
لَكَ وَمَآ أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مِن شَىْءٍ ۖ رَّبَّنَا
عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤﴾

Indeed ye have had a good example in Abraham and those with him ... It means that we should take Abraham, *peace be upon him*, and those who believed with him, as an example according to which we should model our own behaviour in cutting ourselves off from the disbelievers.

... when they said to their people: 'Indeed we renounce ye and what ye worship instead of Allah ... They said to the disbelievers that they were having nothing to do with them or with the idols which they built and worshipped. They meant that they saw them as nonsense and not as gods at all, but as their enemies, although there is no real enmity between a human being and lifeless substance.

... We disbelieve in ye, ... It means that they told their people that they repudiated their path. Or it may be that this was an address to the idols, which were spoken of as intelligent beings so as to maintain a unity of expression between the believers' speech and that of the disbelievers, who thought of the idols as having reason and perception.

... and between us and ye enmity and hatred have appeared, ... 'Hatred' is given for *al-baghḍā'*, which intensifies the enmity (*ᶜadāwah*) and leads to it being internalised.

... forever, until ye believe in Allah alone', They declared themselves the enemies of the polytheists for as long as they continued in disbelief, until they believed in Allah and gave up the worship of idols.

... except the word of Abraham ... That is: model yourselves upon the example set by Abraham, except in what he said to his father, for that was before Allah the glorified had made such a thing forbidden.

... to his father: ... That is, to his guardian who was his father's brother, Āzar, who had raised him.

"I shall seek forgiveness for thee ... Abraham said this because he had promised him that he would seek forgiveness for him, but when it became clear for him that he was an enemy of Allah, he renounced him. It is not suitable for a Muslim to model himself upon that, seeking forgiveness for a disbeliever.[22]

Yet it is possible that the exception refers to the phrase *'And indeed we renounce ye...'* Then, the meaning would be that they said to the disbelievers that they renounced them, except Abraham who had promised his uncle that he would seek forgiveness for him, before it became clear that he was Allah's enemy; at which point he said to his uncle:

... and I have no right upon Allah for thee" ... Abraham, *peace be upon him,* was telling his uncle that whatever Allah wished to do to him, it would be done, and he could in no way prevent Allah's punishment of him.

Then Abraham and those who believed in him said:

... Our Lord! Upon Thee we rely; ... They had placed all their affairs in His hands.

... to Thee we turn; ... It means that they return to Him in their affairs, for since man is the creation of Allah, glory be to Him, it is as if he is from Him, and when he obeys Him it is as if he is returning to Him – an instance of conveying a spiritual reality in physical terms.

... and unto Thee is the destiny. It means that they realised the end of their affairs was with Allah, glory be to Him, and that upon the day of resurrection they return to His reckoning and requital.

---

[22] One of the requirements of *istighfār* or 'seeking forgiveness' is that the individual concerned regrets his offence or wrong doing, for if one insists on his wrong doing then the seeking of forgiveness, either by the individual or by proxy, is meaningless.

'Our Lord! Make us not a tribulation for those who disbelieve; and forgive us, our Lord, indeed Thou are the Mighty, the Wise.' (5)	رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَٱغْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَآ ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

'Our Lord, make us not a tribulation for those who disbelieve; ... Disbelievers are tested by their disbelief and their persecution of the believers, and disobedience. When a believer is made a trial or test for the disbeliever, the believer is persecuted, and sometimes cannot stand it. It means that they did not wish to be dominated by the disbelievers, for they would persecute them and they would not be able to bear it.

... and forgive us, ... They sought the concealment and erasure of their faults.

... our Lord, indeed Thou are the Mighty, ... He is indomitable in His authority.

... the Wise.' All His works are on the basis of wisdom and goodness. Perhaps this prayer is to teach the Muslims how to call on Allah, glory be to Him.

Indeed, ye have had in them a good model – for whosoever is hoping in Allah and the last day. And whosoever turns away – indeed Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Lauded. (6)	لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ ﴿٦﴾

Indeed, ye have had in them a good model ... The believers at the time of the revelation had a good model to imitate in the persons of Abraham and his followers, with regard to their actions and their cutting themselves off from the disbelievers. It is repeated so as to convey the following:

... for whosoever hopes in Allah and the final day ... The good model is only for those who hope for the reward of Allah and the last day. As for those who deny that, there is no point to them modelling themselves upon one who believed in Allah. This stresses the connection between faith and imitation.

... And whosoever turns away ... That is, fails to take Abraham as a model, but takes the disbelievers as friends.

... indeed Allah is the Self-Sufficient, ... He is in need of no person or deed, and free from want.

... the Lauded. His being lauded is an attribute of His essence; therefore He needs no obedience from anyone, nor any praise. Therefore, he who turns away harms only himself; Allah, glory be to Him, is not harmed, as He is absolutely free from want.

And if you, the believers, wished to be friendly with the Makkans on account of your ties and previous connections, it is likely that Allah would prepare the means of them being guided, so that friendships with them would be allowed:

Maybe Allah will set affection between ye and those of them ye hold as your enemies; Allah is powerful, and Allah is forgiving, merciful. (7)

عَسَى ٱللَّهُ أَن يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ ٱلَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُم
مِّنْهُم مَّوَدَّةً ۚ وَٱللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ٧

Maybe Allah will set affection between ye and those of them ye hold as your enemies; ... It means that Allah would bring about affection between ye and the disbelievers of Makkah through accepting Islam.

... Allah is powerful, ... He could bring that about.

... and Allah is forgiving, ... He is forgiving of the friendships maintained while the Makkans were in disbelief.

... merciful. He bestows His grace and mercy, over and above His forgiveness and pardon.

Since the content of these āyāt has been the prohibition of friendly relations with every disbeliever, an exception is now made:

Allah does not forbid ye from those who have not fought ye over the religion, and have not driven ye from your habitations – from being kind to them and acting justly towards them; indeed Allah loves the just. (8)

لَّا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَٰتِلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ
وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَٰرِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ
وَتُقْسِطُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ ٨

Allah, glory be to Him, does not prevent the believers from bearing affection towards those disbelievers who do not fight them on account of their being religious and do not drive them from their homes. In other words, from their being friendly with peaceful disbelievers.

... from being kind to them and acting justly towards them; ... It means that Allah does not forbid the believers from being kindly and just with those

mentioned, where the kindness and justice is mutual. It is said that the Muslims sought the Messenger’s command regarding relations with their disbelieving relatives. And it is said that Qutaylah bint ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz turned a disbelieving woman from her house as she was visiting her daughter Asmā’ with gifts, and so the āyah came down:

... indeed Allah loves the just. He loves those who are just in their affairs.

Allah only forbids ye from those who have fought ye over the religion and driven ye from your habitations and supported your expulsion – that ye befriend them; and whosoever befriends them – those, they are the wrongful. (9)

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ قَـٰتَلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ
وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَـٰرِكُمْ وَظَـٰهَرُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ
إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ ٱلظَّـٰلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

The believers are only prevented from being friendly towards those who fight them on account of their having the religion, and drive them from their homes in Makkah and elsewhere, and support and cooperate with each other in the believers’ expulsion. Any believers who take them as friends wrong themselves by disobeying Allah and the Messenger.

As the topic has been affection for the disbelievers, the theme now turns to mention some related laws, concerning women:

O ye who believe, when migrating believeresses come to ye, examine them – Allah is more knowing of their faith. Then, if ye know them to be believeresses, do not return them to the disbelievers; neither they are lawful for those, and nor those are lawful for them; and give to those what they had dispensed. And there is no blame upon ye that ye marry them when ye have given them their dowries. And do not adhere to the ties with the disbelieving women. And ask for what ye have

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا جَآءَكُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَـٰتُ
مُهَـٰجِرَٰتٍ فَٱمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۖ ٱللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَـٰنِهِنَّ ۖ
فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَـٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى
ٱلْكُفَّارِ ۖ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ ۖ
وَءَاتُوهُم مَّآ أَنفَقُوا۟ ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَن
تَنكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَآ ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا
تُمْسِكُوا۟ بِعِصَمِ ٱلْكَوَافِرِ وَسْـَٔلُوا۟ مَآ أَنفَقْتُمْ

وَلۡيَسۡـَٔلُواْ مَآ أَنفَقُواْۚ ذَٰلِكُمۡ حُكۡمُ ٱللَّهِ يَحۡكُمُ بَيۡنَكُمۡۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ ١٠

dispensed, and those can ask for what they had dispensed. There for ye is the rule of Allah. He arbitrates between you; and Allah is knowing, wise. (10)

O ye who believe, when migrating believeresses come to ye, examine them ... The āyah is about women who migrate from the realm of disbelief to the realm of Islam. They were to be questioned until it was clear that they were sincere in their faith and their migration. In *al-Ṣāfī* it is narrated from al-Qummī that when a woman joined the Muslims from the disbelievers, she would be tested by swearing by Allah that she was not motivated by anger with her husband or love for one of the Muslims, but that she was motivated by Islam. Having made such an oath her Islam would be accepted as genuine.

... Allah is more knowing of their faith ... He knows better than anyone whether they are indeed believers or not.

... Then, if ye know them to be believeresses, do not return them to the disbelievers; ... Once it was clear through their swearing an oath and the other indications that they were sincere in their faith, they were not be returned to the realm of disbelief.

... neither they are lawful for those, and nor those are lawful for them ... Believing women are not lawful for the disbelievers, and a disbeliever will be punished in the hereafter for touching a Muslim woman (i.e. for being in wedlock with her and having sexual relation with her). Once a woman becomes a Muslim her husband, if a disbeliever, becomes as a stranger to her (and she would not be considered being married to him).

... and give to those what they had dispensed, ... It means that when the Muslims kept the wives of disbelievers amongst them, they were to return to their disbelieving husbands what they had spent in marrying them, i.e. the *mahr* or dowry, which is the gift that is given by the bridegroom to the bride when they marry. The wife would return to her disbelieving husband the dowry he had given her, and then she would be married by a Muslim.

... and there is no blame upon ye that ye marry them when ye have given them their dowry ... As for their previous marriage contracts with disbelievers, such marriages are annulled by their accepting Islam, in accordance to the details given in jurisprudence. In short, their lawfulness for the Muslims is conditional upon a new marriage-contract and their being provided a dowry.

... And do not adhere to the ties with the disbelieving women, ... Muslims are not to marry disbelieving women. ‘Ties’ (ᶜ*isam*) means marriage contracts, since through the marriage contract each spouse is bound to the other. So, just as it is not lawful to take a disbelieving woman as wife, so it is not lawful for a man who enters Islam to remain married when his wife remains a disbeliever, as per the details given in Islamic jurisprudence. And just as a Muslim woman may not be married to a disbeliever, so too a Muslim man may not be married to a disbelieving woman.

... and ask for what ye have dispensed, and those can ask for what they had dispensed ... There was to be a reciprocity between the two parties: were a Muslim woman to go over to the disbelievers her husband was to seek from them the return of the *mahr* he had spent on her, just as when a disbelieving woman joined the Muslims he too could ask for the return of her *mahr*.

... There for ye is the rule of Allah ... The address is to the believers.

... He arbitrates between ye; ... That is, the foregone is the ruling He establishes between the believers and the disbelievers.

... and Allah is knowing, ... He knows what is in man’s best interests.

... wise. His wisdom is the basis for His commands and prohibitions. Therefore, the foregone rulings accord to goodness and wisdom.

It is said that a clause of the peace treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah was that anyone fleeing to the other side would be handed over to the party from which he had fled, so that if a man was to flee from the disbelievers to the Muslims they would return him, and vice-versa. But the treaty did not mention women. After the treaty had been concluded, Subayᶜah bint al-Ḥarth came as a Muslim to the Messenger of Allah. Then her husband came seeking her return, but he was a disbeliever. When he asked the Messenger that she be handed over, these āyāt came down.

And if any of your wives desert ye to the disbelievers, and then ye follow it up, give those whose wives have gone the like of what they dispensed. And be guardful of Allah, in whom ye are believers. (11)

وَإِن فَاتَكُمۡ شَيۡءٞ مِّنۡ أَزۡوَٰجِكُمۡ إِلَى ٱلۡكُفَّارِ
فَعَاقَبۡتُمۡ فَـَٔاتُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتۡ أَزۡوَٰجُهُم مِّثۡلَ
مَآ أَنفَقُواْۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَنتُم بِهِۦ مُؤۡمِنُونَ
١١

And if any of your wives desert ye to the disbelievers, and then ye follow it up, give those whose wives have gone the like of what they dispensed ... The meaning is that were a Muslim woman to apostatise and go over to the disbelievers, and then the disbelievers were to refuse to pay the Muslim husband the *mahr* or dowry of the woman who had joined the disbelievers, and if the believers were to fight against the disbelievers and gain from them spoils-of-war (spoils-of-war is one of the meanings of *ᶜuqbā*, which is the name for *fa ᶜāqabtum* given as 'follow up'), then the Muslims should give to the husband the like of the *dowry* he had given her. In other words, if a wife fled to the disbelievers and then they refused to return her *mahr* to the husband, then the Imam (or leader) of the Muslims was to give the amount of her dowry to her husband from the spoils of war.

... And be guardful of Allah, ... That is, fear His punishments and do not disobey His commands by denying the husband the dowry when his wife had fled to the disbelievers and they refused to return the *dowry.*

...in whom ye are believers' For guardfulness (*taqwā*) is among the requisites of faith.

It is narrated that after the previous āyah came down, the believers did as they were commanded and returned to the disbelievers the dowry of any woman who left them to join the Muslims, but that the disbelievers refused to do likewise, and so this āyah was sent down.

It is narrated from the Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, *peace be upon them*, that on being asked the meaning of the phrase in this āyah 'and then ye follow it up' (*fa ᶜāqabtum*), the Imams are reported to have said that when a man's wife goes [to the disbelievers] and then he *'follows it up'* and takes another woman as wife, the *Imam* (i.e. leader of the Muslims) is to give him the *mahr* or dowry of the woman who had gone.

The author's verdict: My view is that whichever meaning we take, it seems that it is for the *Imam* [i.e. presiding leader of the Muslims] to give a Muslim man the dowry he gave to his wife who subsequently flees to the disbelievers, whether he wishes to marry again or not, and whether or not any 'spoils of war' are gained. Allah knows best.

O thou the Prophet, when the believeresses come to thee pledging allegiance that they not partner

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ إِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَـٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰٓ
أَن لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا

anything unto Allah, and steal not, and fornicate not, and kill not their children, and not make a claim they have forged about that between their arms and their legs, and not disobey thee in aught honourable, so take their allegiance, and seek forgiveness for them from Allah; indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful. (12)

يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَٰدَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَٰنٍ
يَفْتَرِينَهُۥ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا
يَعْصِينَكَ فِى مَعْرُوفٍ ۙ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ
ٱللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

O Messenger, when believeresses come to thee ... It means women who come to the Messenger wishing to become believers; they are termed ‘believeresses’ *(mu’mināt)* out of courtesy.

... pledging allegiance ... The Messenger would take the allegiance of women by placing his hand in a bowl of water, removing it, and then the woman would place her hand in the bowl and make the oath. ‘Allegiance’ (*bay*ᶜ*ah*) means selling all one has to Allah and the Messenger, just as He says, *‘Indeed Allah purchases from the believers their souls and their property’*.

... that they not partner anything unto Allah ... That is, they would recognise the divine oneness and not assume any partner with Him.

... and steal not ... Neither from their husbands nor from anyone else.

... and fornicate not ... with other men, regardless of whether they (the women) were married or not.

... and kill not their children ... They will not terminate their pregnancies, not bury their newborn alive, and not kill them in any other way.

... and not make a claim they have forged about that between their arms and their legs ... They will not lie about their babies, claiming falsely that their husband is the father when they have fornicated and the husband is not the father! A child is born between the legs and is suckled between the arms. This is in addition to the prohibition of fornication and adultery that preceded. It seems this was common during the period of ignorance.

***... and not disobey thee in aught honourable*, ...** It means the obligations of prayer, zakāt and the good things they are commanded to do. Everything the Messenger commanded was honourable; the word is used to encourage compliance.

... so take their allegiance, ... With these conditions their Islam is acceptable and theirs is the garden and the rewards in return for their allegiance.

... and seek forgiveness for them from Allah; ... It means in regard to the wrongs they had previously committed.

... indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful. He forgives and above that, He bestows His mercy and His bounty.

Finally, the theme turns to that with which it began, the prohibition of friendly relations with the enemies of Islam, for which purpose the surah *came down:*

O ye who believe, befriend not a people upon whom Allah is wrathful; they despair of the hereafter just as the disbelievers despair of the companions of the graves. (13)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا۟ قَوْمًا غَضِبَ ٱللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَئِسُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ
ٱلْكُفَّارُ مِنْ أَصْحَـٰبِ ٱلْقُبُورِ ﴿١٣﴾

O ye who believe, befriend not a people upon whom Allah is wrathful; ... It is narrated that this āyah came down about some of the Muslims who were poor and associated with the Jews, so as to be given some of their harvest, [as the Jews of Madinah were farmers].

... they despair of the hereafter ... They had no faith in it, and did not hold themselves accountable.

... just as the disbelievers despair of the companions of the graves. ' That is, they deny that those in the graves will be returned to life. So the Jews and the disbelievers were equal in having no faith in the hereafter, though the former made a false, deceitful show of believing in it.

Surah al-Ṣaff (61)
'The (Battle) Ranks'

سورة الصف

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *ṣaff,* meaning a battle rank or ranks. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. And while surah al-Mumtaḥanah concluded on the topic of cutting friendship ties with the disbelievers, this surah opens on the topic of fighting against them.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We seek help through the name of the God to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth; and is there one there more worthy than Him of our seeking help from him? Indeed He is Allah, in whose hand are all things, and who helps those who seek His help.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who bestows mercy and fulfils the shortcomings, and He is the best of those from whom help is sought.

Whatever is in the heavens and that in the earth glorifies to Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (1)

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۖ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ ۝١

Whatever is in the heavens and that in the earth glorifies to Allah; ... The meaning is not limited to the heavens and the earth and everything that they contain, but includes all creation. This āyah is repeated at the beginning of other surahs and here in this surah for emphasis and to imprint it firmly in the mind, for the glorifying of the creation – whether in the existential sense or the perceptual sense – is a thing strange to the mind and so it needs to be emphasised and consolidated.

... And He is the Mighty ... He is dominant in His sovereignty.

... the Wise. He does everything according to beneficence and wisdom, meaning the placing of things in their proper place.

The circumstance of this revelation was that a group of believers used to say that when they met the enemy they would not flee and would not return from them, until the day of 'Uḥud, when they fled. Thereupon these āyāt were sent down:

O ye who believe, why do ye say what ye do not? (2)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝٢

The question form conveys criticism, for speech without action is worse than silence without action, just as action without speech is better than action with speech, except when speech is for the purpose of encouragement and suchlike. It is said that in regard to actions people are in four categories: those who speak and act, those who speak without acting, those who neither speak nor act, and those who act without speaking about it. The fourth is the best, the worst is the second, and the first is better than the third.

It is most loathsome in the sight of Allah that ye say what ye do not. (3)

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَن تَقُولُواْ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝٣

Speech unmatched by action is grievously loathsome to Allah, glory be to Him.

Indeed Allah loves those who fight in His path in ranks, as if they are a compact edifice. (4)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَـٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِهِۦ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُم بُنْيَـٰنٌ مَّرْصُوصٌ ۝٤

Indeed Allah loves those who fight in His path ... It means those who fight to exalt His word and in seeking His satisfaction with them, in the disciplined condition of them being:

... in ranks, ... That is, without disorder and without divisiveness.

... as if they are a compact edifice. They are so firm that they are like a compact, solid structure, like a wall. It is narrated that Muslims said, 'If only we knew the dearest action in the view of Allah we would dispense all our wealth and our lives in performing it.' And so the āyah *'Indeed Allah loves those...'* was sent down. Then, after the day of 'Uḥud and they turned back, Allah sent down the āyah *'...why do ye say...'*.

The theme then turns to warn the Muslims against being like the companions of Moses, peace be upon him, who troubled him after knowing that he was a Messenger from Allah, the Exalted, for they refrained from war and thus vexed the Messenger and disobeyed his command:

And when Moses said to his people, ‘O my people! Why do ye vex me, when ye have known that I am Allah’s Messenger unto ye?’ So when they swerved, Allah swerved their hearts; and Allah guides not the perverse people. (5)

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِۦ يَٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُونَنِى
وَقَد تَّعْلَمُونَ أَنِّى رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا
زَاغُوٓا۟ أَزَاغَ ٱللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ
ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴿٥﴾

And when Moses said to his people, ‘O my people, why do ye vex me, ... Moses’ people, the sons of Israel, severely tried Moses by their actions, such as their worshipping the calf, and their saying, *‘Go thou and thy Lord, and fight them.’*

... when ye have surely known that I am Allah’s Messenger ... ‘Surely’ is given for *qad*, which is emphatic, though normally in the same grammatical context it implies proximity in time. And it is possible that here it is used in the normal sense, in that even the likelihood that he was a Messenger should have been enough to prevent them from annoying him.

... unto ye? ... It means sent in order to guide them.

... So when they swerved ... They swerved from the truth by continuing to annoy him, as is the nature of the Jews.

... Allah swerved their hearts; ... That is, He left them to themselves and denied them His hidden graces, until their hearts went further astray. Attributing their swerving to Him, glory be to Him, is because when He deserts a person that person is drawn by the desires, which lead him to swerve.

... and Allah guides not the perverse people. When a people depart from obedience to Allah, glory be to Him, after the signs and proof, and in that sense are perverse (*fāsiqīn*), He leaves them to themselves and no more bestows upon them His hidden graces.

And the Jews acted the same way with Jesus the son of Mary, peace be upon them: they vexed him after he had brought them the clear proofs:

And when Jesus the son of Mary said, ‘O sons of Israel, indeed I am Allah’s Messenger unto ye, confirming the Torah before me and giving glad

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ٱبْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَٰبَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ إِنِّى
رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُم مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَىَّ مِنَ

tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me – His name is Ahmad.' So when he came to them with the clarifications, they said, 'This is clear sorcery.' (6)

ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ وَمُبَشِّرًۢا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِى مِنۢ بَعْدِى ٱسْمُهُۥٓ أَحْمَدُ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُم بِٱلْبَيِّنَـٰتِ قَالُوا۟ هَـٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ۝٦

And when Jesus the son of Mary said, ... It means: 'And recount, O Messenger, when Jesus the son of Mary said ...' The Qur'an normally calls him Jesus the son of Mary (Maryam), *peace be upon them*, so as to deny his being the son of Allah.

... O sons of Israel, ... It means the Jews.

... indeed I am Allah's Messenger unto ye, ... I am raised to guide ye.

... confirming the Torah before me and giving glad tidings of a Messenger ... He gave them the glad tidings of a Messenger from Allah, Exalted be He.

... who shall come after me – His name is Ahmad' ... That is, our Prophet, Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*. The distinguished Muhammad Ṣādiq Fakhr al-Islam, who was an eminent Christian scholar [of the city of Urūmiyah, died circa 1315 H, 1897 CE] and then became a Muslim, recounts in his book *Anīs al-A^{c}lām*, [volume 5, pp 139-210] a lengthy account on this topic, and explains that the name *parakletos* [which has been taken for *perikletos*] was an explanatory rendering of 'Ahmad' which exists in their books. [Ahmad is another name of the prophet Muhammad; both are derived from the Arabic word meaning the Praised One – *perikletos* in Greek.] And it was usual for the Prophets to confirm their predecessors and give the tidings of their successors, for they were brothers all sent by Allah, glory be to Him, to clarify a single path – differences in detail were due to the particular conditions of their ages and locations.

... So when he ... It means Jesus, or the Messenger, Ahmad, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

... came to them with the clarifications, ... It means the clear proofs.

... they said, 'This is clear sorcery.' ... They disbelieved while claiming that the clear proofs were manifest sorcery. Now, if the pronoun 'he' refers to Jesus, then this is in line with the Jews repudiating Moses a liar, and if it refers to the Messenger of Allah then the āyah concerns all three missions, and how the

followers of the two previous religions received the Messenger of Allah about whom they had received the glad tidings.

And who is more wrongful than he who forges the lie on Allah, while he is called to Islam? And Allah guides not the wrongful people. (7)

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ ٱفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَىٰٓ إِلَى ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ ﴿٧﴾

And who is more wrongful than he who forges the lie on Allah ... It means: who is a more serious wrongdoer than the person who devises a lie about Allah, and calls His word sorcery, and His Messenger a lying sorcerer?

... while he is called to Islam? ... He invents such lies simply because he is called to Islam, wherein lies his salvation in the world and the hereafter.

... And Allah guides not the wrongful people. It means that He keeps His hidden graces from those who treat themselves wrongfully through disbelief and stubborn disavowal after having seen the light and the guidance, and who, after having been clearly shown the path, fail to travel it.

They wish to put out the light of Allah with their mouths; but Allah will fulfil His light, even though the disbelievers may detest. (8)

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوا۟ نُورَ ٱللَّهِ بِأَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَٱللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

They ... It means those disbelievers who were contemporary to the revelation and the Messenger of Allah.

... wish to put out the light of Allah ... That is, His Messenger and his path, which are called a light as they illuminate the dark alleyways of life by the programmes that lead to bliss and to arrival at the destination; like one who carries a torch on a dark night so as not to bump into anything, and to safely reach the place at which he wishes to arrive.

... with their mouths; ... They imagined they would be able to extinguish the light of Islam through their calling it lies and their creating confusion through mockery.

... and Allah will complete His light, ... He shall make His religion triumphant. When a light is extinguished its perpetuation through time is over. But when it is not extinguished it grows and finally lights up everywhere forever.

... even though the disbelievers may detest. They are averse to the perpetuation of His light and its illuminating the world.

(It is) He who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth so as to make it manifest over all religion, even though the polytheists may detest. (9)

هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَرۡسَلَ رَسُولَهُۥ بِٱلۡهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ ٱلۡحَقِّ لِيُظۡهِرَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلدِّينِ كُلِّهِۦ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ ٱلۡمُشۡرِكُونَ ٩

(It is) He who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth... Allah, glory be to Him, dispatched His Messenger, Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family,* with guidance for mankind for their eternal bliss, and with the religion of Islam.

... so as to make it manifest over all religion, ... The reason for the dispatch was in order to make that religion triumph over all religions. Islam is triumphant over all other religions in two ways: first, in reason and proof, in which it has been triumphant since the time of the Messenger *may Allah bless him and his family*; and second, in dominance and authority, and that will be in the time of the Imam Mahdi, *peace be upon him.*

Amir-al-Mu'minin (the Commander of the Believers) was once asked about this āyah and whether Islam was yet manifest. He said, 'Definitely not! By Him in whose hand is my soul, not until there is no village without it being declared there morning and night that 'there is no god but Allah'.

... even though the polytheists may detest. He shall exalt His religion despite the pride of those who set up partners with Allah.

O ye who believe, shall I point ye to a transaction that will save ye from a painful chastisement? (10)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ هَلۡ أَدُلُّكُمۡ عَلَىٰ تِجَٰرَةٖ تُنجِيكُم مِّنۡ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٖ ١٠

O ye who believe, ... The address is to the believers, even though the sense is general, as it is the believers who will benefit from it by implementing it.

... shall I point ye ... It means: do ye wish Me to guide ye.

... to a transaction that will save ye from a painful chastisement? Is any transaction better than that which saves a person from the chastisement of the fire?

Then the Almighty outlines that transaction, which returns the highest gains:

Ye believing in Allah and His Messenger and ye striving in the path of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is better for ye, were ye knowing. (11)

تُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَتُجَٰهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ
ٱللَّهِ بِأَمۡوَٰلِكُمۡ وَأَنفُسِكُمۡۚ ذَٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ إِن
كُنتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ ١١

Ye believing in Allah... The belief in the God and His oneness.

... and His Messenger ... It means confirmation of what he brought, and belief here means real, deep belief. So there is no discord here with the address being made to ‘ye who believe’ just as in the āyah *‘O ye who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book ...’* [4: 136]

... and ye striving in the path of Allah ... It means that we exert ourselves with the effort, which includes fighting in His path, to exalt the word of Allah.

... with your wealth ... It means expending one’s wealth for His sake.

... and your lives ... Holding them cheap for Him, even when it means giving them and being killed in His path.

... That is better for ye, ... Faith and striving, each in its own place, are better than polytheism, which leads a person to the fire and punishment.

... were ye knowing. If we were knowledgeable we would know that faith and combat are better and more beneficial than disbelief and laziness.

When this price is paid and ye do it:

He shall forgive ye your sins and enter ye into gardens, rivers flowing under them, fine dwellings in Gardens of Eternity – that is the magnificent achievement. (12)

يَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ ذُنُوبَكُمۡ وَيُدۡخِلۡكُمۡ جَنَّٰتٖ تَجۡرِي مِن
تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ وَمَسَٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةٗ فِي جَنَّٰتِ عَدۡنٖۚ
ذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡفَوۡزُ ٱلۡعَظِيمُ ١٢

He shall forgive ye your sins and enter ye into gardens, rivers flowing under them, fine dwellings in Gardens of Eternity ... Allah will forgive you all your previous sins, and He will place you in gardens under the palaces and villas and trees of which flow rivers of honey, water, milk and wine; and He will house

you in those gardens within beautiful palaces. Those who get there will be there forever; they will never come out.

... that is the magnificent achievement. This forgiveness and entry into the gardens is the grand achievement of attaining salvation, felicity and bliss, above which there is no greater success.

And something else ye love: succour from Allah and a near conquest; and give glad tidings to the believers. (13)

وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا ۖ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

And something else ye love: ... That is, in addition to the blessing of the achievement of the garden, in return for belief and struggle there is a desirable blessing in store in the world:

... succour ... His aid in defeating the disbelievers.

... from Allah ... Assistance from Him sufficient to make His troops victorious over the enemy, even though materially they may be disadvantaged.

... and a near conquest; ... It means the liberation of the land. And it was just as He said, glory be to Him, for in a short time they conquered Makkah, Persia, Rome [Eastern Byzantine] and many other territories of the polytheists and disbelievers.

... and give glad tidings ... The address is to the Messenger.

... to the believers. That is, if they were sincere in the faith and performed the obligation of *jihād*.

O ye who believe, be the succourers of Allah, just as Jesus the son of Mary said to the disciples: 'Who are my succourers unto Allah?' The disciples said, 'We are Allah's succourers!' So a party of the sons of Israel believed and a party disbelieved; so We aided those who believed against their enemies, and they became the manifest. (14)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُونُوٓا۟ أَنصَارَ ٱللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ٱبْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّـۧنَ مَنْ أَنصَارِىٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ ٱلْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنصَارُ ٱللَّهِ ۖ فَـَٔامَنَت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنۢ بَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ وَكَفَرَت طَّآئِفَةٌ ۖ فَأَيَّدْنَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا۟ ظَـٰهِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

O ye who believe, be the succourers of Allah, ... Be constantly in His service by establishing His religion, as opposed to the believer who does not prepare himself for the victory, but only implements some of the religious articles.

... just as Jesus the son of Mary said ... It means that we should serve Allah in the same way sought by Jesus of his disciples.

... to the disciples: ... They were his followers and students.

... 'Who are my succourers unto Allah?' ... He was asking them who of them would accompany him in that straight journey towards Allah's satisfaction and rewards, that was the implementation of his teachings.

... The disciples said, 'We are Allah's succourers!' ... Jesus' address may either have been limited to the disciples and they all answered in the affirmative, or it was made to the general population, and His word 'said to the bright ones' is on account of how they were the group who responded to his address.

... So a party of the sons of Israel believed ... It means they believed with real faith, and these were the disciples and those who followed them.

... and a party disbelieved; ... Either they disbelieved in Jesus or they believed in him but later deviated like those who took to the trinity.

... so We aided those who believed against their enemies, and they became the manifest. Allah made the true followers of Jesus triumph over their disbelieving enemies in argument and proof, or in numbers and power over them. And just as Allah assisted Jesus' true followers over the Jews and the deviant Christians, so too He shall assist true Islam over other religions and over deviant Islam. Triumph and dominance is termed as manifestation, on account of how the dominant is manifest and the dominated is concealed.

Surah al-Jumuᶜah (62)
'Congregation'

سورة الجمعة

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *'jumuᶜah'*, meaning 'Congregation'. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. While the preceding 'Surah al-Ṣaff' concluded on the topic of manifestation and triumph of the followers of Jesus, *peace be upon him*, this surah opens on the topic of the Divine mission among those without a scripture, citizens of Makkah, 'the maternals' (*ummiyīn*); both peoples received Divine messengers and books.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah... The beginning is in the name of God in whose hand are all things; and the beginning is in the name of He in whose hand are all things solely because He is worthy of that, and in seeking His mercy – and He in whose hand are all things is the worthiest of our seeking His mercy.

...The Compassionate, the Merciful. He who bestows mercy on the servants with grace, for His mercy is a grace bringing completion upon the incomplete.

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah – the King, the All-Holy, the Mighty, the Wise. (1)

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ ٱلۡمَلِكِ ٱلۡقُدُّوسِ ٱلۡعَزِيزِ ٱلۡحَكِيمِ ۝١

Whatever is in the heavens and that in the earth is glorifying to Allah, ... The skies and everything in them, and the earth and all that it contains, is constantly saying 'glory to Allah' (*subḥānallah*), so declaring His purity of being and above being in any way incomplete. And these declarations of His purity are either existential (*takwīnan*), in that by existing everything is a sign indicating that He is an all-knowing, all-powerful Creator; or it is by a tongue or a way of their own understanding.

...the King... It is given for *al-malik*; it means that His word is absolute throughout existence, and any authority other than His authority is figurative.

... the All-Holy ... It is given for *al-quddūs*, meaning that He is holier than to have any fault, deficiency or imperfection.

... the Mighty ... It is put for *al-ᶜazīz*. He is dominant in His sovereignty.

... the Wise. It is put for *al-ḥakīm*. He does everything according to beneficence and wisdom.

(It is) He who raised among the 'maternals' a Messenger from amongst them, reciting upon them His signs and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the wisdom; even though beforehand they were in a clear straying. (2)

هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلْأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢﴾

(It is) He who raised... It means that Allah the Exalted sent.

... among the maternals ... It means the Arabs. They are called 'maternals' *(ummiyīn)* either because the reference is to the people of the City of Makkah, called the *umm al-qurā* - 'mother of villages' - as the outlying villages of Arabia in general and the Ḥijāz in particular were under its influence; *[Ummi* means citizen of *umm al-qurā.]*. Or because the Arabs were in the main unlettered and illiterate, and so, in their ignorance, were like one born to his mother with no experience beyond her. That the Messenger was sent among the Arabs does not mean that his mission was limited to them.

... a Messenger... To guide them.

... from amongst them, ... and from their land.

... reciting upon them His signs... It means that he recited to the Arabs His signs and proofs; or it means the portents or āyāt of the Qur'an.

... and purifying them... He gave them the purification of knowledge, for a careful teacher cleanses his pupils of the dirt and wounds of the heart by protecting them from the vices and from the dishonourable deeds.

... and teaching them the Book... It means His rules and His Law (*sharīᶜah*).

... and the wisdom; ... So that they would know how to place things in their place, for the meaning of wisdom is to place things in their place.

... even though beforehand they were in a clear straying. Before the Messenger came to them the 'maternals' were in clear and obvious deviation. They were without the correct beliefs, without virtuous actions, without wholesome

habits and without refined ethics. The meaning is that he delivered them to the highest level of perfection, even though before him they were at the most distant depth of deviation.

And others of them who have not yet joined to them; and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (3)	وَءَاخَرِينَ مِنۡهُمۡ لَمَّا يَلۡحَقُواْ بِهِمۡۚ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ ۝٣

And others of them... It means that he taught other maternals, up until the day of resurrection. They are 'of them', either in the sense that they are their descendents, or in the sense that in faith they are of the same substance.

... who have not yet joined to them; ... 'Not yet' (*lammā*) indicates that they have not joined, but that they will, and their joining to them is expected.

... and He is the Mighty, ... He is overwhelming in His authority, and so able to guide those others.

... the Wise. He places things in their places.

That is the profusion of Allah – He gives it to whom He wills; and Allah is holder of magnificent profusion. (4)	ذَٰلِكَ فَضۡلُ ٱللَّهِ يُؤۡتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ ذُو ٱلۡفَضۡلِ ٱلۡعَظِيمِ ۝٤

That is the profusion of Allah... The sending of the Messenger is Allah's bounty and mercy —upon the Messenger in His making him a Messenger, and upon humankind in His honouring them by guiding them.

... – He gives it to whom He wills; ... It is known that Allah bestows no mercy save in accordance with wisdom, upon whoever merits the favour.

... and Allah is holder of magnificent profusion. His profusion is more magnificent than the grace of any other, just as it is more magnificent than any favour bestowed by another.

The theme now turns to warn the Muslims of the necessity of holding tight to the Law, so that they not become like the Jews, who turned from implementing the Torah after their holding tight to it during the time of Moses, peace be upon him:

مَثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ حُمِّلُواْ ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ ٱلْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًاۢ ۚ بِئْسَ مَثَلُ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِـَٔايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٥﴾

The similitude of those burdened with the Torah and then carried it not is that of the donkey carrying tomes – atrocious is the similitude of the people who belie the signs of Allah; and Allah guides not the wrongful people. (5)

The similitude of those burdened with the Torah... They were given the Torah by Allah, glory be to Him, to implement. The term 'burdened' *(ḥummil)* shows that they held to the Torah reluctantly and with great difficulty, rather than with spontaneous enthusiasm.

... and then carried it not... They deliberately refrained from acting in accordance to it. They dismissed it and abandoned its rules.

... is that of the donkey carrying tomes... 'Tomes' is put for *asfār*, the plural of *sifr*, meaning scriptures or book. The donkey that carries books upon its back does not benefit from them. And the Jews are like that: although they have the Torah on their backs they do not benefit from it and do not implement its rules; and whoever superficially holds to the Qur'an without implementing it is the same.

... atrocious is the metaphor of the people who belie the signs of Allah; ... That people is the Jews who practically belied the Torah, through their actions, and belied Allah's signs in the Qur'an. The āyah means: vile is the tribe for whom this is the metaphor; for a vile metaphor is only for a vile people.

... and Allah guides not the wrongful people. Allah does not guide by means of His unseen favours a people or tribe who wrong themselves with disbelief and disobedience after their being guided to a path which they failed to follow.

The Jews imagined they were the God's elect, even after their abandoning the Torah, and the theme now refutes this idea:

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ هَادُوٓاْ إِن زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ لِلَّهِ مِن دُونِ ٱلنَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُاْ ٱلْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾

Say: 'O ye who are judaized, if ye claim that ye are Allah's friends, apart from humankind, then yearn for death, if ye be truthful.' (6)

The address is to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*. He was to say to those called Jews, who followed Judaism, that if they really thought they were the God's chosen people, above the rest of mankind, and that all others are not loved by God, then they should be longing for death. That is because the true 'friend' of Allah has no fear of death, as He is sure of a high rank over there.

And they will never yearn for it, due to what their hands have sent forward; and Allah is knowing of the wrongful. (7)

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُۥٓ أَبَدًۢا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌۢ بِٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٧﴾

And they will never yearn for it due to what their hands have sent forward; ... The Jews will never ever long for death, on account of what they have done in disbelief and disobedience, and because their condition in the hereafter will be horrible. Attributing to the hands that which they send on to the hereafter is on account of how it is the hands that are most active in actions.

... and Allah is knowing of the wrongful. He is knowing of their situation and shall recompense them for their injustice; it is a warning to the Jews.

Is their not longing for death and their fleeing from it of any benefit to them?

Say, 'Indeed the death from which ye flee – indeed it will meet ye, thereupon ye shall be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform ye of what ye did.' (8)

قُلْ إِنَّ ٱلْمَوْتَ ٱلَّذِى تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُۥ مُلَٰقِيكُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَٰلِمِ ٱلْغَيْبِ وَٱلشَّهَٰدَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

Say, ... The address is to Allah's Messenger.

... 'Indeed the death from which ye flee – indeed it will meet ye ... He was to tell them that their flight from death, through their developing the means of health and their avoidance of life-threatening situations, would not prevent them from the meeting to which they would be summoned, which is definite with no doubt about it.

... thereupon ... That is, after their deaths.

... ye shall be returned ... Since man issues from the will and intention of Allah, glory be to Him, his journey to His reckoning and requitals is like returning to Him.

... to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, ... He knows what is secret and what is open. 'The unseen' (*al-ghayb*) is what is absent from the senses; the witnessed is that which appears to them, or before which a person is present.

... and He will inform ye of what ye did.' They will be informed, as a prelude to the requital, of all they did, good or evil.

With the clarification of the necessity of implementing the Law, so as not to be like the Jews and their failure to implement the Torah, the theme turns to clarify a magnificent law: the Friday prayer. This prayer is obligatory during the period of the presence (of Imam Mahdi, peace be upon him), but as for the period of the absence, our scholars differ in their views. I have discerned that it was obligatory in the presence of the Imam or his representative only during the period in which the Imam had a free hand; thus there is no report of an Imam performing it after Imam Ḥusayn, peace be upon him – and this was not due to cautious concealment (taqiyyah). That is the secret of why the view of it being not mandatory is widespread among our scholars.

O ye who believe, when the call to the prayer is made on the Day of Congregation, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave aside trade – that is better for ye, were ye knowing. (9)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا نُودِىَ لِلصَّلَوٰةِ مِن
يَوْمِ ٱلْجُمُعَةِ فَٱسْعَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَذَرُوا۟ ٱلْبَيْعَ ۚ
ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

O ye who believe, when the call to the prayer is made... The practice of the Messenger was that he would sit upon his *minbar* while Bilāl called the *adhān* at the door of the Masjid, and a second *adhān* would be called on the *minbar*. This continued after him during the time of Abu Bakr and ʿUmar. When ʿUthman came [to power], he would have the *adhān* called firstly on the roof of his house. This is the 'third *adhān*' that is said to be an innovation. It is called the 'third *adhān*' as it is in addition to the two legitimate *adhāns*. The *adhān* from the roof is not part of Islam.

... on the Day of Congregation, ... It means during a part of the Friday; i.e. that part which is required for the Friday prayer. The day is called *al-jumuʿah* because it is the day of the public congregation (*ijtimāʿ*) for the prayer. It was a holiday before Islam, and then it was legislated in Islam.

... then hasten to the remembrance of Allah, ... It means go to the *Jumuᶜah* prayer without delay.

... and leave aside trade ... It seems that 'trade', here, means any occupation that prevents one going to the prayer.

... that is better for ye, were ye knowing ... Those who know about these things know that hurrying to the prayer and desisting from trade is better for the believers, both in their religion and their world.

So when the prayer is over, then disperse in the earth and reach for Allah's profusion, and remember Allah much, that ye might thrive. (10)

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةُ فَٱنتَشِرُواْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱبْتَغُواْ مِن فَضْلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱذْكُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

So when the prayer is over, ... That is, once the Jumuᶜah prayer is concluded.

... then disperse in the earth... The believers may then disperse in the earth, each going to his own work.

... and reach for Allah's profusion, ... It means seek through trade and so forth the provision of Allah and His grace. The imperative conveys legality and lawfulness, It is not an order signifying an obligation.

... and remember Allah much, ... He is to be remembered by tongue and by heart, while seeking His bounty and at other times, for He cleanses the heart of the dirt of heedlessness and disobedience.

... that ye might thrive. It might be that in such ways we will achieve His contentment with us and His generosity.

Jābir ibn ᶜAbdullah narrates: 'A caravan arrived while we were praying behind the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. So the people scattered towards it, leaving only twelve men, myself among them. Then this āyah came down.'

The Messenger is quoted as saying: 'By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you had all followed them until none of you were left, the valley would have become an inferno for you.'

And when they see trading or a distraction they scatter towards it, and leave thee standing. Say: 'That which is with Allah is better than distraction and trade, and Allah is the best of provisioners.' (11)

وَإِذَا رَأَوْاْ تِجَـٰرَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا ٱنفَضُّوٓاْ إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَآئِمًا ۚ قُلْ مَا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ ٱلتِّجَـٰرَةِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

And when they see trading ... It means when those who are praying the *Jumu*ᶜ*ah* prayer see an alternative opportunity to buy or sell. These opportunities would come with the arrival of caravans from far-off places, upon fixed occasions. This meant that whoever failed to rush to purchase his needs would find that the goods he needed would be sold out, so that he would have to wait for the next fixed market-day until he could buy what he needed.

... or a distraction ... It refers to the drums that members of the caravan would beat as they arrived in order to announce their arrival to the people of the town. Such noises distract from the remembrance of Allah, and preoccupy those who wish to turn to the prayer.

... they scatter towards it, and leave thee standing ... Each in his own way ran off towards the distraction and the trade, leaving the Messenger standing delivering the *Jumu*ᶜ*ah* sermon, without a thought for his status, and putting the world above the hereafter.

... Say: 'That with Allah is better than distraction and trade ... The Messenger of Allah was to tell them that the reward for remaining and listening to the sermon is better than distraction, and better than trade. At the beginning of the verse the order given was trade and distraction, whereas here it is distraction and trade. There the order starts with the more significant, in that they scattered for trade and for less than that, distraction. Here, the order starts with the less significant, meaning that the rewards of Allah are greater than distraction and than which is more than that, trade.

... and Allah is the best of provisioners.' They should not have thought that had they refrained from transactions with the caravan they would have remained without provision, for Allah would have provisioned them from the abundance of His bounty.

Surah al-Munāfiqūn (63) سورة المنافقون

'The Hypocrites'

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *munāfiqūn,* meaning 'hypocrites'. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as to matters of faith. Whereas Surah al-Jumuᶜah concluded on the topic of the Messenger being left standing, an action most closely fitting the hypocrites, this surah begins with an account about the hypocrites that took place during one of the Messenger's expeditions.

It is narrated that the surah was sent down concerning events during the expedition to the Bani Musṭaliq, in the fifth year of the Hijrah. The Messenger had gone out with it, and on the return journey stopped at a well, at which the water was scant. Anas ibn Sayyār, allied to the Anṣār, and Jahjāh ibn Saᶜīd al-Ghaffāri, the hired servant of ᶜUmar, arrived at the well together, and fell into an argument. Jahjāh hit the face of Anas, causing it to bleed. Anas called out the men of Khazraj, a group of the Anṣār (meaning the Supporters) while Jahjāh called out the Quraysh, the Muhājerīn (meaning the Migrants) and men armed themselves till it seemed there would be bloodshed. Hearing the cry, ᶜAbdullah ibn Ubayy [who came to be known as the Chief Hypocrite] asked what it was about. On being informed, he fell into a terrible rage. Then he said, 'I was dreading such a thing happening. I did not think that I would hear the like of this without being able to do anything about it.' Then he turned to his fellows and said, 'This is what you have done! You have settled them (Muhājerīn) in your homes, you have shared with them your property, you have protected them with your lives, and you have bared your chests for war, till your women have become widows and your children have become orphans. Had you driven them out they would be the dependents of others and not of you.'

Then he said, 'If and when we return to Madinah the mighty will drive out the weak.' By this he meant that he and his kind would drive out the Messenger of Allah and the believers. Amongst the group was Zayd ibn Arqam, a young boy. The Messenger was resting under a tree with a number of Anṣār and Muhājerīn. Zayd came and told him what ᶜAbdullah ibn Ubayy had said. The Messenger asked the boy if perhaps he had imagined it. The boy swore that he had not. So he asked him if perhaps Ibn Ubayy was angry with him. The boy swore that he was not. He asked him if he had embarrassed him. The boy swore that he had not. At that the Messenger called for his riding-camel,

mounted it and called for the people to do the same. They wondered at it, for he was not wont to ride at that time of day. The people mounted up and soon Sa^cad ibn ^cUbādah caught up with him, and after exchanging greetings, he said, 'You are not used to riding at such a time?' So replied he, 'Have you not heard what your companion said?'

They said, 'And what companion have we other than thee, O Messenger of Allah.'

He said, '^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy; he thinks that on the return to Madinah the grand will drive out the abject.'

They said, 'O Messenger of Allah, it is you and your companions who are the grand, and it is he and his companions who are the abject.'

The Messenger journeyed the whole of that day without talking to anyone. The Khazraj turned on ^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy and blamed him for what he had said. He swore that he did not say it. So they told him to come with them to the Messenger, so that they could apologise, but he arrogantly turned his face. Night descended and still the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*, journeyed, breaking only for the prayer. He journeyed all that night until the following day he finally halted. As soon as his men descended, they collapsed onto the ground in exhaustion. Then ^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy came to the Messenger and he swore that he had not said that, and that 'there is no god but Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah; and Zayd has lied about me.'

In response, the Messenger remained silent. The Khazraj turned on Zayd ibn Arqam, blaming him for lying about their chief, ^cAbdullah. As the Messenger rode off again, Zayd rode alongside him, saying, 'O Allah, indeed Thou know that I have not lied about ^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy.' They had not gone far when the condition of receiving revelation (*waḥy*) came upon the Messenger to the extent that the weight of it was making his camel about to kneel. When it was over, sweat was pouring from his brow. Then told Zayd ibn Arqam 'O lad, you spoke the truth, and your heart remembered; and Allah has sent down concerning that which you said a revelation.'

As soon as they set down, his companions gathered round him, and he recited to them Surah al-Munāfiqūn, and thus Allah exposed ^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy.

The son of ^cAbdullah ibn Ubayy then came to Allah's Messenger and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if you have decided on his death, then order me to do it, so that it will be me who brings you his head; for by Allah, the Aws and the

Khazraj know that I am the most righteous son to my father, and I fear that if you order someone other than me and he kills him, then my spirit will not let me look at the killer of my father, and then I would kill a believer for a disbeliever, and I will enter the fire.'

The Messenger of Allah replied, 'No, we will be good companions to him for thee, as long as he is with us.'

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful	بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We seek help through the name of the Allah, that He be an aid to us in our needs.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He whose mercy embraces all things; that He may grace us with mercy and solve our problems in the world and in the hereafter.

When the hypocrites come to thee, they say, 'We testify that indeed thou are the Messenger of Allah.' And Allah knows that indeed thou are His messenger, and Allah testifies that indeed the hypocrites are liars. (1)	إِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلۡمُنَـٰفِقُونَ قَالُواْ نَشۡهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ ٱللَّهِۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَعۡلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُۥ وَٱللَّهُ يَشۡهَدُ إِنَّ ٱلۡمُنَـٰفِقِينَ لَكَـٰذِبُونَ ١

When the hypocrites come to thee... It means [c]Abdullah ibn Ubayy; it has earlier been given that the plural is used to stand for the genus or type, while indicating an individual. In such cases the plural is used to show that the ruling applying to the subject also applies to whoever has those qualities in common with that subject. In the same way, the singular can also be used to denote genus or type, for the individuality is shed and what remains is the generic meaning true of every individual. The hypocrite is him who is internally a disbeliever, while outwardly showing himself to be a believer.

... they say, 'We testify that indeed thou are the Messenger of Allah ... The hypocrites said in his presence that such was their belief at heart, and not merely a verbal declaration.

... And Allah knows that indeed thou are His messenger, ... This phrase comes in the Qur'an to pave the way for the following line, so as not to give the idea that Allah, glory be to Him, denies His Messenger's messengership by refuting the hypocrites.

... and Allah testifies that indeed the hypocrites are liars. They lied in their claim that they believed in the Messenger's messengership from the depth of their hearts. The truth was that their belief was limited to their tongues, while their hearts remained in disbelief and opposition.

They take their oaths as a shield, thus bar from the path of Allah. It is indeed evil what they do. (2)

ٱتَّخَذُوٓاْ أَيۡمَٰنَهُمۡ جُنَّةٗ فَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّهُمۡ سَآءَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعۡمَلُونَ ٢

They take their oaths as a shield, ... Their oaths were nothing more than a shield to ward off any trouble from the Messenger and the Muslims.

... thus bar from the path of Allah ... By their clinging to disbelief internally and their making false oaths, they barred the people from the path of Allah – the path of His religion and of His rewards. So, by their hypocrisy they kept themselves in the ranks of the Muslims, while secretly spreading dissension, and dissuading the people from correct faith.

... It is indeed evil what they do. Their action of manifesting faith while remaining disbelievers inside, and so barring (the people) from the path of Allah, glory be to Him, was a most evil thing to do.

That is because they believed and then they disbelieved, so their hearts became thus en-natured, and so they understand not. (3)

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمۡ ءَامَنُواْ ثُمَّ كَفَرُواْ فَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمۡ فَهُمۡ لَا يَفۡقَهُونَ ٣

That is because they believed and then they disbelieved, ... Their hypocrisy was on account of their professing belief on their tongues, and then disbelieving at heart. The nature of those who stray is such that on seeing some good they rush towards it in sincerity, but when they see some difficulties along with the benefits, they falter, and although they apparently remain in agreement – with regret – and at heart they withdraw in preference to their perceived interests.

... so their hearts became en-natured, ... As they accustom themselves to disbelief and take on the attributes that result in their hearts or souls become regulated by those qualities, and this becomes the character trait of such individuals. Allah, glory be to Him, created the human soul (*nafs*) in this way, [in that when the human follows a trend he would adapt it as his disposition].

For this adaptation was on account of their hypocrisy. 'Hearts' (*qulūb*) means 'souls' (*anfus*).

... and so they understand not. They do not understand the reality of faith and of guardfulness and piety, for their souls are diverted; for when a person is diverted he sees the good as ugly and the ugly as good.

And when thou see them, their persons impress thee; and if they speak, thou listen to their words. They are like propped-up timbers; they reckon every outcry is against them. They are the enemy, so beware of them; may Allah kill them! How deviated they are! (4)

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ ۖ وَإِن يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ۖ كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ۖ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ۚ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٤﴾

And when thou see them... The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger, or simply to any individual listener.

... their persons impress thee; ... They are of fine appearance; handsome and well-turned out.

... and if they speak, thou listen to their words ... Whenever they speak, and on whatever subject, they speak well, in fine style and pleasantly, so that the listener pays attention. Yet despite their fine appearance and pleasant speech,

... They are like propped-up timbers, ... That is, they are coreless, empty and without the qualities of excellence and virtue, and are like hollow pieces of wood that cannot stand up on their own, and so need to be supported by a wall or such like, before they will stand up straight. The wood that has its core consumed by termites tends to be rotten inside, even if on the outside it appears good, and it cannot stand up and cannot bear any weight. The hypocrites are the same way: they have the appearance of goodness, but it has no inner reality.

... they reckon every outcry is against them ... They are cowardly and their hearts are empty of the virtues of faith. Whereas the believer's heart is fixed and firm in a crisis, the hypocrite is constantly afraid that his inner reality will be discovered and he will be exposed and humiliated. Therefore, whenever any crisis occurs the hypocrite fears that he will be caught up in it and his inner reality be discovered and disgraced. A crisis or calamity is called an 'outcry'

(*ṣayḥah*) as a crisis always raises an outcry; it is an instance of the cause being known as the effect.

... They are the enemy, ... That is, they were the Messenger’s single most dangerous enemy, and their enmity was total. The disbeliever’s appearance does not belie his evil, but the hypocrite is hidden within the Muslim community by his profession of belief, and is not seen and not recognised for what he really is, until he commits some act of corruption and causes difficulties.

... so beware of them; ... The address is in the singular. The Messenger was to be wary of the hypocrites mixing among the Muslims and learning their secrets, for then they would learn of their strengths and weaknesses, and thus they are more dangerous than the external enemy, and more able to harm and cause corruption.

... may Allah kill them! ... It is a prayer, an invocation, against them to the effect that Allah kills them. It is to give the Muslims confidence and relieve them from anxiety and paranoia.

... How deviated they are!’ An exclamation: after the clarity of all the proofs, still they remain so deviated, so astray.

And when it is said to them, ‘Come, Allah’s Messenger will seek forgiveness for ye,’ they wrench their heads away, and thou see them barring; and they are arrogant. (5)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
لَوَّوْا رُءُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُم
مُّسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

When anyone asked them to come and seek that the Messenger ask forgiveness for the sins they had committed, they would jerk their heads away from the speaker in arrogance and pride. And anyone watching could see them preventing themselves from the path of truth. The signs of their arrogance and their feeling that they were in no need of the Messenger’s seeking forgiveness for them would be manifest in their appearance.

Even it is for them whether thou seek forgiveness for them or thou seek not forgiveness for them – Allah will never forgive them; indeed Allah guides not the perverse people. (6)

سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ
لَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾

Even it is for them whether thou seek forgiveness for them or thou seek not forgiveness for them – Allah will never forgive them; ... Whether the Messenger was to seek forgiveness for the hypocrites or not, would make no difference to them, for seeking forgiveness only benefits the believer, and not the hypocrite. Allah will never forgive them because at heart they are disbelievers.

... indeed Allah guides not... It means with His hidden graces.

... the perverse people. It means those who have departed from obedience to Allah through their hypocrisy and dissension.

هُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنفِقُواْ عَلَىٰ مَنۡ عِندَ رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ حَتَّىٰ يَنفَضُّواْۗ وَلِلَّهِ خَزَآئِنُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلۡمُنَٰفِقِينَ لَا يَفۡقَهُونَ ٧

It is them who say, 'Dispense not on those alongside the Messenger of Allah, until they scatter' – while Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth! But the hypocrites understand not. (7)

It is them who say, 'Dispense not on those alongside the Messenger of Allah, until they scatter' ... The hypocrites used to say to each other that they should not give to or help the needy believers, so that they would leave the Messenger and disperse. He, glory be to Him, comments on this their attitude in His word:

... while Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth! ... It is from these treasures that He pours forth upon those around the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.* Those hypocrites imagined that the treasures of provision, wealth and sustenance were in their hands, and that if they were to withhold them from the believers they would disperse. They were ignorant of the fact that the sun, the earth, water and air that are the sources of all wealth, are entirely in the hand of Allah, exalted be He, and that He pours forth liberally from them upon His believers through trade and agriculture and suchlike; and that therefore the hypocrites' withholding anything from those around the Messenger would not cause them to scatter.

... But the hypocrites understand not. It means that they do not understand that the treasures of the heavens and the earth are in the hand of Allah, exalted be He.

They say, 'Truly if we return to Madinah, the mightier will surely drive out of it the weaker.' Indeed the might is Allah's, and His Messenger's and the believers'! But the hypocrites know not. (8)

يَقُولُونَ لَئِن رَّجَعْنَآ إِلَى ٱلْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ ٱلْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا ٱلْأَذَلَّ ۚ وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِۦ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

They say, 'Truly if we return to Madinah, the mightier will surely drive out of it the weaker.'... The hypocrites claimed that the mightier, by whom they meant themselves, would drive out from the city the weaker, by whom they meant the Messenger and his companions. *They are refuted in His word:*

... Indeed the might is Allah's, ... And indeed He is with the believers.

... and His Messenger's... through Allah giving him power.

... and the believers'!... Through their holding fast to Islam, which brings them the happiness of the world and the hereafter, and honour, dignity and might in both of them.

... But the hypocrites know not. Rather, they imagined that the superiority was theirs, simply because they had a few supporters among the hypocrites, and a little wealth. And experience was to show the proof, for it was Ibn Ubayy, the abject, who came to the grand, the Messenger seeking pardon for what he had perpetrated.

Now, since the topic has been hypocrisy, the inner reality of disbelief and the outer show of faith, the theme now turns to remind the Muslims not to act according to the ethical standard of the hypocrites, by turning to the world and away from the hereafter:

O ye who believe, your wealth should not, and nor should your offspring, divert ye from the remembrance of Allah; and whosoever does that, then they surely are the losers. (9)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَٰلُكُمْ وَلَآ أَوْلَٰدُكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْخَٰسِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

O ye who believe, your wealth should not, and nor should your offspring, divert ye from the remembrance of Allah; ... It means that we are not to let our wealth and children preoccupy ourselves from the remembrance of Allah, causing us to fail to observe His rights in them, and to fail to be present for the prayer and the other obligations, all out of our being too busy with our financial and family affairs.

... and whosoever does that, then they surely are the losers. Those who let themselves be diverted by matters of finance and family from the remembrance of Allah bring ruin to themselves, for they have no salvation in the hereafter from the chastisement.

And dispense from what We have provisioned ye, before death comes to one of ye, so he says, 'My Lord, if only Thou would delay me until a short while, then I would give in charity and be among the virtuous.' (10)

وَأَنفِقُواْ مِن مَّا رَزَقۡنَٰكُم مِّن قَبۡلِ أَن يَأۡتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ ٱلۡمَوۡتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوۡلَآ أَخَّرۡتَنِيٓ إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٖ قَرِيبٖ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِّنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ١٠

And dispense from what We provide ye, ... It means obey the injunctions concerning the *khums,* the *zakāt,* and the *salāt;* though it might be more general and apply equally to giving in charity from knowledge, influence and power, as well as from wealth.

... before death comes to one of ye, ... It means before one sees the signs or causes of death in oneself.

... so he says, 'My Lord, if only Thou would delay me until a short while, ... When a person sees that he is about to die, he says: 'Lord! If only Thou would let me stay some more in the world, if only for a little while, I will certainly reform myself.'

... then I would give in charity ... He promises to give charity and purify his wealth and dispense it in the path of Allah.

... and I would be among the virtuous.' He promises to pray and fast and perform hajj and pour himself into obedience to the divine commands.

But does his request benefit him? Certainly not:

And Allah never delays a soul once its term has come; and Allah is informed of what ye do. (11)

وَلَن يُؤَخِّرَ ٱللَّهُ نَفۡسًا إِذَا جَآءَ أَجَلُهَا ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَبِيرُۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ ﴿١١﴾

And Allah never delays a soul once its term has come; ... Once a person's term has come, such pleadings do not persuade Allah to let them stay in the world over and above their determined term. After that, there is no further opportunity to act virtuously with one's body or to righteously dispense one's wealth.

... and Allah is informed of what ye do. O man, so do not commit that which will lead ye to the chastisement and to the punishments.

Surah al-Taghābun (64)
'Mutual Cheating'

سورة التّغابن

The surah derives its name from the word *taghābun*, denoting two parties' cheating each other, or exchanging each other's places (in paradise and in the Fire) that occurs in āyah 10. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. While Surah al-Munāfiqun concluded with the command to obey and the call not to disobey, this surah opens by considering the obedient and the disobedient.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah... We begin by the name of Allah in whom are gathered all the qualities of perfection. Is there any more worthy of our beginning in his name, than He who is the First and the Last, who was before all things and then made all things exist?

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who is merciful towards all things. Mercy in the human being is a condition of the heart; in Him, glory be to Him, it means the actions that are based on mercy – His grace and His favouring – for in Him, glory be to Him, there is no place such as a heart for such qualities.

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah. His is the kingdom and His is the praise; and He is over all things powerful. (1)

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۖ لَهُ ٱلۡمُلۡكُ وَلَهُ ٱلۡحَمۡدُۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٌ ١

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah ... 'Is glorifying' is given for *yusabbiḥu.* It seems that the variance between past and present tenses in these āyāt is to highlight the actual glorifying in the former, and the fact that it is presently happening and is continuing to happen, in the latter. Allah, glorified is He, is glorified and declared free of any fault or imperfection by everything in the skies and the earth, as well as the skies and the earth themselves.

… His is the kingdom … For He is the absolute, and the real dominant and king, while other kings are relative and have limited kingdom and dominion.

Because he has no real dominance, any individual who has anything (be it power, dominance, kingdom, etc.) he is given it by Allah, glory be to Him.

... and His is the praise; ... All praises return to Him; for praise is only for something beautiful done by choice – and the originator of all beauties is Allah, glory be to Him. As for the praise of any other being, such praise is conditional and relative.

... and He is over all things powerful. He is powerful enough to begin all things and to conclude them, and to do with them as and how He wills.

(It is) He who created ye; so among ye is a disbeliever, and among ye is a believer. And Allah of what ye do is an observer. (2)	هُوَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنكُم مُّؤْمِنٌ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

He it is who created ye; ... Allah it was who created mankind.

... so among ye is a disbeliever, and among ye is a believer ... Some of us disbelieve in Him through an evil choice after the clarity of the proofs and the manifestation of the convincing arguments. And some of us believe in Allah and in what the Messengers brought. Classifying mankind into two divisions in this way is to explain that disbelief is improper considering that the dominion and the creation is His, glory be to Him, and that all of existence glorifies His magnificence.

... And Allah of what ye do is an observer. He sees all that man does, and will recompense him for all that he does.

He created the skies and the earth in truth; and He fashioned ye and beautified your forms; and unto Him is the final Return. (3)	خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ بِٱلْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

He created the skies and the earth by the truth; ... The creation is not a frivolity or a diversion like the games of children. Rather, the creation was for a purpose and an end and in accordance to wisdom.

... and He fashioned ye... He has given each of us an outer form or shape, being our senses and our physical dimensions, and an inner form, being our reason and our sensibilities.

... and made splendid your forms; ... This is a generalization, not taking into account those individual cases whose forms are not splendid.

... and to Him is the final return. That is, all of us are travelling towards His reckoning and His requitals after death, or on the resurrection day.

He knows what is in the skies and the earth; and He knows what ye conceal and what ye manifest; and Allah is knowing of what is in the breasts. (4)

يَعۡلَمُ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعۡلِنُونَۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمُۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ ﴿٤﴾

He knows what is in the skies and the earth; ... He knows everything that comes into existence and everything that ceases to exist, what happens to everything and how it happens.

... and He knows what ye conceal and what ye manifest; ... It means the actions done in secret, and the actions done openly in the presence of others. It is possible that 'what ye conceal' includes both secret actions and the things that take place in the breasts.

... and Allah is knowing of what is in the breasts. It means what takes place in the human heart.

The āyāt having dealt with divinity, the theme now turns to warn the disbelievers who turn away from Allah and from faith in Him, in His word:

Has there not come to ye the account of those who disbelieved beforehand? They tasted the mischief of their affair, and theirs is a painful chastisement. (5)

أَلَمۡ يَأۡتِكُمۡ نَبَؤُاْ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَبۡلُ فَذَاقُواْ وَبَالَ أَمۡرِهِمۡ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٞ ﴿٥﴾

Has there not come to ye the account of those who disbelieved beforehand? ... Communities of disbelievers prior to those who opposed the Messenger turned away from faith and were chastised by Allah on that account.

... They tasted the mischief of their affair, ... They tasted the evil consequences of their disbelief and belying.

... and theirs is a painful chastisement. They tasted chastisement in the world, while in the hereafter a painful chastisement is theirs.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُۥ كَانَت تَّأۡتِيهِمۡ رُسُلُهُم بِٱلۡبَيِّنَٰتِ فَقَالُوٓاْ أَبَشَرٞ يَهۡدُونَنَا فَكَفَرُواْ وَتَوَلَّواْۚ وَّٱسۡتَغۡنَى ٱللَّهُۚ وَٱللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٞ ٦

***That is because their Messengers used to come to them with the clarifications, but they would say, 'Is it for a human being to guide us?' So they disbelieved and turned away while Allah is needless. And Allah is free of want, lauded.* (6)**

That is because there came to them their Messengers with the clarifications, so they said, 'Is it for a human being to guide us?' So they disbelieved and turned away … The chastisement that gripped them was because Messengers came to them from Allah, with clear proofs and decisive arguments and miracles, but they rejected them, objecting that they did not think it possible that the human species itself would be used to guide other humans. So they disbelieved in the Messengers and what they brought, and turned away from acceptance of the truth.

... while Allah was needless ... It means that He did the action of one needless of them, which was to leave them to themselves. Until then He had sought their guidance and rectitude, but they had not accepted. So the term that 'Allah was needless', or that 'He acted as one needless', is a case of likening the non-sensory to the sensory. And because the phrase could give the impression that Allah was in need of them before that, His speech continues:

... And Allah is free of want, ... He is rich in His essence, needing no thing and no person.

... lauded. He is praised by His own actions and is in no need of any other praise; and nor does the failure of any to praise Him detract from His being praised at the level of His essence *(maḥmūdun bidhdhāt).*

Those who turn away from faith in Allah and His Messengers, turn away in a similar way from faith in the resurrection:

زَعَمَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓاْ أَن لَّن يُبۡعَثُواْۚ قُلۡ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبۡعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلۡتُمۡۚ وَذَٰلِكَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ يَسِيرٞ ٧

***Those who disbelieve assume that they will never be raised. Say: 'Nay, by my Lord, indeed ye shall be raised, and then indeed ye shall be informed of what ye did. And that for Allah is easy.'* (7)**

Those who disbelieve assume that they will never be raised ... Their denials of an afterlife and of their being revived for the reckoning and the requitals are not rooted in certainty, but in assumption and conjecture.

... Say: 'Nay, by my Lord, indeed ye shall be raised, ... The Messenger was to tell them 'Nay, the matter is not as ye suppose, for by Allah, my Lord, ye shall certainly be raised and brought to life after your deaths, and then ye shall certainly be informed – by Allah, the angels and the Prophets and whoever else assists in the reckoning (*al-ḥisāb*) and the 'informing' or 'presentation of accounts' (*al-ikhbār*) – of what ye did.'

... and then indeed ye shall be informed of what ye did ... Those guilty of disbelief and disobedience will be informed of their deeds before being punished for them.

... And that for Allah is easy.' Restoring the dead to life, and informing them of their deeds, is in no way difficult for Allah. He who originally created the creation is powerful enough to restore it, glory be to Him.

So believe in Allah and His Messenger and the light We have sent down; and Allah of what ye do is informed. (8)

فَـَٔامِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَٱلنُّورِ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنزَلۡنَاۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ خَبِيرٞ ﴿٨﴾

So believe in Allah and His Messenger... As the raising of the dead and the reckoning and the recompense are all true, it is for all mankind to accept the belief in Allah and His Messenger, by submitting to them and obeying their commands.

... and the light We have sent down; ... It means the Qur'an, which illuminates the dark path of life so that man is able to see his way to felicity and salvation. Clearly, the Imams, peace be upon them, are among the embodiments of this light, as is recorded.

... and Allah of what ye do is informed. He is knowing and informed; so, when ye believe, He will recompense ye with wages and rewards, and your faith will not be wasted.

The raising of the dead and the requitals shall all be upon:

The day He gathers ye for the day of the gathering – that is the day of mutual cheating! And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously – He annuls his evils and enters him into gardens, rivers flowing under them; eternal in them, forever. That is the magnificent achievement. (9)	يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ ٱلْجَمْعِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ ٱلتَّغَابُنِ ۗ وَمَن يُؤْمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَٰلِحًا يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِۦ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

The day He gathers ye for the day of the gathering... The Day of Resurrection is called 'the day of the gathering' (*yawm al-jam*^{c}) on account of how upon that day all of Allah's creatures will be gathered for the reckoning.

... that is the day of mutual cheating!... 'Mutual cheating' is given for *taghābun*. It means that the companions of the gardens will cheat the companions of the fire by taking their places in the garden – for every person has a place in the garden and a place in the fire – and vice versa: the companions of the fire will cheat the companions of the garden of their places in the fire. It is termed 'cheating' for both parties in a way similar to the āyah: *'So whose aggresses against ye, aggress against him the like of his aggression against ye.'*

... And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously... When a person believes in Allah and considers Him to be free of what is unworthy of Him, and acts according to that belief,

... He annuls his evils... Allah annuls whatever sins and disobedience he has previously been guilty of, and wipes them from his record.

... and enters him into gardens, rivers flowing under them; eternal in them, forever ... Such fortunate persons are placed by Allah in the gardens of paradise, under the palaces and trees of which flow rivers of honey, wine, milk and sweet water. Once there those persons are eternal and they stay there forever, without end.

... That is the magnificent achievement. Their being eternal in the gardens of paradise is the successful achievement, over and above which there is no greater achievement and no greater happiness.

And those who disbelieve and belie Our signs – those are the companions of the fire, eternal in it, and atrocious is the destination! (10)

وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَكَذَّبُوا۟ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَآ أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَـٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ وَبِئْسَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٠﴾

And those who disbelieve and belie Our signs – those are the companions of the fire, ... By contrast, those who reject belief in Allah and in His Messenger and say that Allah's proofs and arguments are false, will be forever in the fire. They are its 'companions' (*aṣḥāb*) in the sense that they are constantly linked to it, all the while they are:

... eternal in it, ... They remain their forever.

***... and atrocious is the destination!*'** The fire is the worst place to take for a home.

As He has summoned to faith, glory be to Him, He now explains some of the benefits of faith that come to a person while in this world, before the achievement of the gardens in the hereafter. This is preceded by a prelude, in His word:

No affliction afflicts but with the permission of Allah; and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. And Allah is of all things knowing. (11)

مَآ أَصَابَ مِن مُّصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَمَن يُؤْمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُۥ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

No affliction afflicts but with the permission of Allah... No affliction troubles a person nor does he find himself in any difficulty, save with the permission of Allah, glory be to Him. Indeed, it is He who determines all things and were it not for His determining things then nothing would happen in creation. Allah, glory be to Him, is able to annul all catastrophes so that they do not afflict anyone, but He determines that they afflict a person so as to test and examine him. This does not mean that evil works are brought about by Allah, glory be to Him, simply that He does not prevent their happening. So whoever is killed wrongly and wrongfully – by the permission of Allah, in the sense that He did not prevent the murderer in some existential way, like making the murderer's hand wither so that he was unable to kill anyone – He permits this and lets the murderer do his deed because the world is the place of examination and trial.

And if Allah, glory be to Him, compelled that there be no ugly deeds, then man would be like the rocks and lifeless matter in being compelled, and the rewards and punishments would be in vain.

Now, after this explanatory preamble, the theme presents the fruit of faith, in His word:

... and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart ... When a person believes in Allah with a correct and deep faith, Allah guides his heart until he is confident that whatever afflicts him is with the knowledge of Allah, and that He will recompense him with wage and rewards for what has afflicted him. And when a person knows that whatever harm befalls him will lead to an increase in his own good, his heart becomes confident and afflictions hardly trouble him.

... And Allah is of all things knowing. He recompenses every person for what they have done.

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger; and if ye turn away, then indeed, upon Our Messenger is only the clear conveyance. (12)

وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱلرَّسُولَ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَىٰ رَسُولِنَا ٱلْبَلَٰغُ ٱلْمُبِينُ ﴿١٢﴾

It is for man to obey Allah in what He commands us, and the Messenger in what he brings us. If we turn away from such obedience, then nothing will befall the Messenger, for his duty is but to clearly inform us. The evil consequences of turning away after being presented the clear delivery will not fall on him, but will fall on those who turn away.

Allah, there is no god but Him; so upon Allah should the believers rely. (13)

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Allah, He who calls us to accept faith in Him, is He besides whom there is no god. He has no partner and no equal. It is for the believers to entrust their affairs to Him, and to rely on Him.

Having called mankind to belief, the thread now explains some of the believer's enemies who will divert him from faith, so that he may be on his guard against them:

O ye who believe, indeed among your wives and your offspring is an enemy of yours; so be wary of them. And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive – so indeed Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (14)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِنَّ مِنۡ أَزۡوَٰجِكُمۡ وَأَوۡلَـٰدِكُمۡ عَدُوّٗا لَّكُمۡ فَٱحۡذَرُوهُمۡۚ وَإِن تَعۡفُواْ وَتَصۡفَحُواْ وَتَغۡفِرُواْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

O ye who believe, indeed among your wives and your offspring is an enemy of yours; ... Among a believer's wives and children there may be some disbelievers or hypocrites, who are the believer's enemies. Therefore, it is for him to be wary of them, lest they bar him from the truth and the guidance.

... And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive ... It means that when they trouble the believer on account of his faith, he is to pardon them without retaliating, and overlook what they have done and deal with them as on a clean sheet, and forgive them in the full sense of erasing their sin and concealing it and not taking retribution for it. So there are three levels: concealing the sin; refraining from reacting, even in words; and refraining from retaliation.

... so indeed Allah is oft-forgiving, ... That is, He forgives the believer, and his erring family, once they repent.

...most merciful. He is merciful to His servants. Therefore it is for the believer to learn forgiveness and mercy from Him. And this, in addition to the rewards it accrues, is a wise policy that attracts people to the faith, for peace in the face of the foe lessens their intensity and casts the love of the attitude of the peaceful individual in their hearts, and attracts them towards him.

Indeed your wealth and your offspring are but a trial; and Allah has a magnificent wage. (15)

إِنَّمَآ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَأَوۡلَـٰدُكُمۡ فِتۡنَةٞۚ وَٱللَّهُ عِندَهُۥٓ أَجۡرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

Your wealth and your sons are but a trial; ... Wealth and offspring are the means of a man's examination, so that it becomes clear who is obedient to Allah concerning them, and who is disobedient. These two are mentioned as examples, for otherwise a man's wives and relatives are also means of his being tried and tested.

... and Allah has a magnificent wage....and immense rewards for he who obeys Allah and refrains from disobeying Him for the sake of his family or wealth.

The fifth Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him*, has said that when a man wished to migrate to the Messenger of Allah, his sons and wives would come to him and would say they implored him by Allah not to go and not to leave them, for they would perish without him. Among such men were those who obeyed their families and remained, and so Allah warned them of their offspring and their women and forbade them from obeying them. And among them were those who departed and left them behind, and said that if they did not migrate with him and Allah did not reunite them in the home of the migration [that is, Madinah] then he would never benefit them again, ever. So when Allah reunited them with the Messenger, He commanded His Messenger to be good to them and act in their interest, in His word: *’And if ye pardon and overlook and forgive – so indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful.’*

So be guardful of Allah as far as ye are able; and listen and obey and dispense that is better for yourselves. And whosoever is protected from the meanness of his soul, so those are the thrivers. (16)

فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ مَا ٱسۡتَطَعۡتُمۡ وَٱسۡمَعُواْ وَأَطِيعُواْ وَأَنفِقُواْ خَيۡرٗا لِّأَنفُسِكُمۡۗ وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفۡسِهِۦ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ ١٦

So be guardful of Allah as far as ye are able; ... It means that we should fear Allah’s punishments as much as we can and as far as we are able to, for *‘Allah charges no soul save to its capacity.’*

... and listen and obey ... It means listen to the Messenger and what he commands ye, and then obey him. And it seems that what is meant by ‘listen’ is to listen so as to act.

... and dispense ... It means dispensing out of one’s wealth in the path of Allah.

... that is better for yourselves ...It means, dispense that which is best, for what is dispensed returns to the dispenser both in the world and in the hereafter.

... And whosoever is protected from the meanness of his soul, ... Protected by Allah from being mean and miserly, so that, with His protection, they are able to dispense in the way he commands.

... so those are the prosperous ones. Those whom Allah protects from the miserliness of their souls, are those who achieve true prosperity; for who is more prosperous than he who achieves salvation and eternal felicity?

In any case, the wealth that a person gives does not go to waste without return, rather it is like a loan that a person lends to Allah, and He returns it greatly increased:

If ye lend to Allah a goodly loan, He will multiply it for ye, and forgive ye. And Allah is all-thankful, most clement. (17)

إِن تُقۡرِضُواْ ٱللَّهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنٗا يُضَٰعِفۡهُ لَكُمۡ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡۚ وَٱللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ١٧

If ye lend to Allah a goodly loan, ... When a person lends to Allah a fine loan, by dispensing it for Allah in His path, without beholdenness (*mann*), ostentation *(riyā),* and not seeking fame or praise or any other such thing that corrupts a good deed:

...He will multiply it for ye ..It means that He will pay it back with an increase, to the extent that for giving one, He will return seven hundred and more.

... and forgive ye ... Besides that, He will also give forgiveness, for the sake of that act of dispensing.

... And Allah is all-thankful, ... It means that He performs the act of one who is thankful; for when a person is thankful he praises the one to whom he is grateful, and does good to him in return for his kindness, and thus acts Allah, glory be to Him: He praises the giver and pours forth goodness upon him in return for his deed.

... most clement. He is not hasty in punishing the disobedient. So, He is thankful to the obedient, clement to the disobedient.

And He knows every act of dispensing and every good deed, and no virtuous act is wasted, for He is:

The Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Mighty, the Wise. (18)

عَٰلِمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبِ وَٱلشَّهَٰدَةِ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ ١٨

The Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, ... His knowledge embraces everything seen and unseen, everything beyond the senses and within their reach, everything held secret and everything disclosed, everything material and everything immaterial. *And He is:*

... the Mighty, the Wise. He is absolute in His authority, powerful over all things; and He does everything in wisdom and beneficence.

Surah al-Ṭalāq (65)

'Divorce'

سورة الطلاق

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of words denoting divorce (*ṭalāq*). Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as to matters of faith. While Surah al-Taghābun concluded with warnings about some women, this surah opens on some rules concerning them.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We seek help by the name of the God that He be an aid to us in our important affairs; for He is the best from whom to seek help, as He has knowledge and power and wisdom.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who bestows mercy even on those who are disobedient and negligent of His commands. For He bestows over and above what is deserving; and He assists even those who seek His assistance but do not deserve it.

O thou the Prophet! When ye divorce the women, divorce them during their term and count the term; and be ye guardful of Allah, your Lord. And put them not from their houses, and nor should they leave, save that they bring a obvious indecency. And these are the boundaries of Allah; and whosoever infringes the boundaries of Allah, indeed he has wronged himself. One never knows, perhaps Allah will bring about thereafter a new matter. (1)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقۡتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحۡصُواْ ٱلۡعِدَّةَۖ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ رَبَّكُمۡۖ لَا تُخۡرِجُوهُنَّ مِنۢ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخۡرُجۡنَ إِلَّآ أَن يَأۡتِينَ بِفَٰحِشَةٖ مُّبَيِّنَةٖۚ وَتِلۡكَ حُدُودُ ٱللَّهِۚ وَمَن يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ ٱللَّهِ فَقَدۡ ظَلَمَ نَفۡسَهُۥۚ لَا تَدۡرِي لَعَلَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحۡدِثُ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ أَمۡرٗا ١

O thou the Prophet, ... The address is to the holy Prophet (*nabī*), but since it regards an important matter concerning him and those with him, the āyah takes up the plural, in His word:

... when ye divorce the women, ... That is: 'when ye have the intention of divorcing them', for both the present and the past tenses can have the sense of intending the action conveyed by the verb.

... divorce them during their term ... It means during the period of their cleanliness (from menses) while copulation has not taken place between man and woman during the period.

... and count the term; ... It means that the days of the woman's waiting-term (*ᶜiddah*), after the conclusion of which she is no more the responsibility of her first husband and she may lawfully marry another man, are to be counted.

... and be guardful of Allah, your Lord ... And therefore do not break His law by divorcing women while they menstruate, or by failing to count their days, so that the divorced woman remains expecting the end of her term so as to set up a new home, without knowing that it is over.

... And put them not from their houses, ... It means that when a woman is divorced she should not be moved from her home until the waiting-term is concluded, for during that term her housing is a duty upon the husband.

... and nor do they leave, ... They are not to leave their homes during their waiting-terms; and if they leave without necessity, they have sinned.

... save that they bring a clarifying indecency ... It means open obscenity and transgression, like fornication (*zinā*), as narrated from the Imam al-Ṣādiq, *peace be upon him*. So when she manifestly fornicates she is removed from her home to be punished. In other narrations the interpretation is that she annoys the other people of the house with her tongue, and so she is removed to another place due to her causing vexation.

... And these are the boundaries of Allah; so whosoever violates the boundaries of Allah, indeed he has wronged himself ... The rulings given concerning divorce are the divine boundaries, protecting the community of His believers. Whoever breaks His rules has wronged himself by preparing himself for punishment.

He, glory be to Him, then explains something of the wisdom of these rules, in His word:

... One never knows... It is given for *lā tadrī*; literally: it (i.e. a soul) knows not.

... perhaps Allah will bring about thereafter a new matter. It means that after the intention to divorce or after the actual divorce itself, and before the

divorced woman's term is concluded, Allah may bring about some change of heart. For in delaying the divorce until the woman is in her term of cleanliness, during which her husband has not had sexual intercourse with her, it may be that he will change his mind and not divorce her. Similarly, legislating the term of waiting, or [c]*iddah*, and her remaining in her home, may well soothe the anger that led to the divorce, so that they turn back to each other and away from the divorce.

So when they reach their term, retain them in honour or part from them in honour; and have two holders of justice from ye witness. And establish the witnessing for Allah. This is that by which whosoever believes in Allah and the Last day is admonished. And whosoever is guardful of Allah – He will make for him a way out. (2)

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ
فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا۟ ذَوَىْ عَدْلٍ
مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلشَّهَـٰدَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ
بِهِۦ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرِ ۚ وَمَن
يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾

So when they reach their term, ... That is: when the divorced women approach the end of their waiting-term, just before it is concluded, for it is then that the man must finally choose between returning to her, or leaving her so that the term is completed.

... so retain them in honour ... When the man decides to return, he is to treat his wife in the way Allah commands him, with fine kindness.

... or part from them in honour; ... It means leaving them to themselves so that their term is concluded, without annoying them, or taking any of their possessions, or disturbing them, as is the practice of the ignorant.

... and have two holders of justice from ye witness ... When a man wishes to divorce his wife he must have two or more just Muslims witness the recitation of the divorce formula. 'Justice', in this sense, is an inner quality that drives a person to fulfil the obligations (*wājibāt*) and refrain from the prohibitions (*muḥarramāt*) from fear of Allah, glory be to Him.

... And establish the witnessing for Allah ... It means that when one of the two parties is in need of witnesses, they should be witnesses for the sake of Allah, glory be to Him, and should not falsify or distort. For when a person does something for Allah, glory be to Him, he is more careful not to add or omit anything.

... This ... That the witnessing be for Allah, glory be to Him.

... is that by which whosoever believes in Allah and the Last day is admonished ... It is only such persons who fear Allah and will perform the witnessing for Allah; others will give it little importance. The indication is that a false testimony reveals the absence of commitment.

... And whosoever is guardful of Allah – He will make for him a way out. When a person fears Allah, glory be to Him, and therefore acts in accordance to His commands, Allah makes him a way out of his difficulties.

And one should not imagine that his testifying in truth will cause him difficulties, due to the anger of whoever sought a false testimony from him. Nor should one suppose that his sustenance will be cut by anyone who seeks a false testimony from him, and who has a hand in his sustenance, like an employer, say, or a customer, or one who has influence with such a person:

And He provisions him from whence he reckons not; and whosoever relies upon Allah – He is enough for him. Indeed Allah shall attain His purpose. Allah has put for everything a measure. (3)

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى
ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بَٰلِغُ أَمْرِهِۦ ۚ قَدْ جَعَلَ
ٱللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾

And He provisions him from whence he reckoned not; ... Allah provisions him his livelihood from sources that he had not foreseen; and experience provides many examples of the truth of this. As an example, in my own time a man killed a whore for her money, then threw the body in the river. He then gave his companions money so that they would not testify against him before the judge, and threatened them against doing so. When the matter was discovered the judge took testimony upon the noble Qur'an; all of them gave false testimony save one. He refused to swear falsely on the Qur'an, and gave true testimony and then fled from the killer. Amazingly, the judge convicted the murderer on the basis of that single testimony, and punished them all, except for him who had already repented and had sworn to the truth. Today, he is still alive and all who know him praise him; whereas the others have all suffered imprisonment, fines and some have died in their youth.

... and whosoever places his trust in Allah – He is enough for him ... When a person entrusts his affairs to Allah, He is sufficient for him against every danger and difficulty, and He saves him from every disaster.

... Indeed Allah shall attain His purpose ... When Allah wants a thing to happen, it happens. Nothing He wants to happen will fail to happen. It should not be supposed by anyone that what He promises will not come about.

... Allah has put for everything a measure ... The processes of Allah proceed according to a determined measure and quantity; so when He determines sufficiency and fair provision for His guardful servant, there is no doubt but that it will be exactly as He wills.

He then explains, glory be to Him, the length of the term after which it is lawful for a divorced woman to take a new husband:

And those of your women who are in despair of menstruation, if ye are in doubt, then their term is three months – also those who menstruate not. And those carrying a child, their term is until they lay down their child. And whosoever is guardful of Allah – He makes for him ease in his affair. (4)

وَٱلَّٰٓـِٔي يَئِسۡنَ مِنَ ٱلۡمَحِيضِ مِن نِّسَآئِكُمۡ إِنِ
ٱرۡتَبۡتُمۡ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَٰثَةُ أَشۡهُرٖ وَٱلَّٰٓـِٔي لَمۡ يَحِضۡنَۚ
وَأُوْلَٰتُ ٱلۡأَحۡمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَن يَضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّۚ
وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجۡعَل لَّهُۥ مِنۡ أَمۡرِهِۦ يُسۡرٗا ٤

And those of your women who are in despair of menstruation, if ye are in doubt, ... It means those divorced women who are not clearly over the age of menstruation – fifty in the case of most women, and sixty in the case of other women such as those descendants of the prophet, and the natives of Iraq known as the Nabaṭi, unless for an exception.

... then their term is three months ... When the three months are over their waiting-term is complete and they can remarry. However, those whose menopause has occurred and no longer menstruate have no waiting-term, for it is lawful for such a woman to remarry as soon as she is divorced.

... also those who menstruate not ... This refers to those who have not yet began to menstruate due their youth, or do not menstruate due to illness and suchlike. Their waiting-term is also three months.

... And those carrying a child, ... It means women who are divorced while they are pregnant.

... their term is till they lay down their child ... The waiting-term of divorced women who are pregnant is until they give birth; so, when they have given birth to the baby they were carrying at the time of the divorce, their waiting-

term is over, whether the period between the divorce and the birth was lengthy or short.

... And whosoever is guardful of Allah – He puts for him ease in his affair. When a person is guardful of Allah and refrains from breaking His commands, He makes his affairs easy so that he doesn't fall into difficulties. And since these rules lead to the suppression of the passions on the part of the men who wish to marry the divorced women, and on the part of the divorced women themselves, the matter is wrapped in the wrappings of pious guardfulness, as a reminder and an admonition, so that neither of the two parties who desire marriage will slip into disobedience.

That is the command of Allah, He sends it down to ye; and whosoever is guardful of Allah – He annuls his evils and magnifies for him a wage. (5)

ذَٰلِكَ أَمۡرُ ٱللَّهِ أَنزَلَهُۥٓ إِلَيۡكُمۡۚ وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يُكَفِّرۡ
عَنۡهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِۦ وَيُعۡظِمۡ لَهُۥٓ أَجۡرًا ﴿٥﴾

That is the command of Allah, He sends it down to ye; ... The rules of divorce as given constitute the command and order of Allah, sent down for our benefit.

... and whosoever is guardful of Allah ... It means he who fears Him and therefore obeys Him.

... He annuls his evils ... He forgives him his sins.

... and magnifies for him a wage. In the hereafter He gives him a magnificent wage and a grand reward.

Allah, glory be to Him, then explains the ruling for the divorced woman's livelihood and housing during her waiting-period, in His word:

Settle them where ye have settled, according to your means; and do not harm them so as to straiten them. And if they are carrying a child, so dispense on them until they lay down their child. Then if they suckle for ye, so give them their wages, and agree between yourselves amicably. And if ye fall out, so another shall suckle him. (6)

أَسۡكِنُوهُنَّ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ سَكَنتُم مِّن وُجۡدِكُمۡ وَلَا
تُضَآرُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُواْ عَلَيۡهِنَّۚ وَإِن كُنَّ أُوْلَٰتِ
حَمۡلٖ فَأَنفِقُواْ عَلَيۡهِنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّۚ فَإِنۡ
أَرۡضَعۡنَ لَكُمۡ فَـَٔاتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَأۡتَمِرُواْ بَيۡنَكُم
بِمَعۡرُوفٖۖ وَإِن تَعَاسَرۡتُمۡ فَسَتُرۡضِعُ لَهُۥٓ أُخۡرَىٰ ﴿٦﴾

Settle them where ye have settled, according to your means; ... The divorced woman is to be lodged by the husband in property he puts at her disposal, according to his means.

... and do not harm them ... It means they are not be lodged in a place that would cause them harm.

... so as to straiten them ... It means to put them in straitened circumstances, by insisting they stay in a place that would inconvenience them, with the aim of putting them in need of the husband.

... And if they are carrying a child, ... That is, if they are pregnant.

... so dispense on them until they lay down their child ... They are to be given their needs of clothing, food and drink and so forth, until they give birth to the babies they are carrying, at which time their waiting-period is over.

... Then if they suckle for ye, ... That is, if they suckle the husband's child after birth.

... so give them their wages, ... They are to be paid for suckling the child, for the costs of the child's sustenance is obligatory upon the father.

... and agree between yourselves amicably ... The parents and those connected to them are all to come to an agreement over the child's suckling, so that no harm be done to any of the three parties: the father, the mother and the child.

... And if ye fall out, so another shall suckle him. If those seeking to come to an agreement over the child's suckling should fail to agree about the mother's position and the rate of the payment she should receive and so forth, then the child is to be suckled by a woman other than the mother. It is likely that this indicates a gentle reproof to the mother that she should not be too difficult.

He then explains, that it is desirable for the father to give plentifully to the divorced woman when she suckles their child, assuming he has an abundance:

The holder of plenty shall dispense from his plenty; and he whose provision is stinted for him should dispense from what Allah has given him. Allah charges no soul save what He has given it; Allah shall place ease after hardship. (7)

لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِۦ ۖ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ
رِزْقُهُۥ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّآ ءَاتَىٰهُ ٱللَّهُ ۚ لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ
نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَآ ءَاتَىٰهَا ۚ سَيَجْعَلُ ٱللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ
يُسْرًا ٧

The holder of plenty shall dispense from his plenty; ... He shall give a plentiful wage for suckling; was she not his wife? And is she not the mother of his child?

... and he whose provision is stinted for him should dispense from what Allah has given him ... When the father is in straitened circumstances, he is to give a wage for suckling his child to the extent of what Allah has bestowed on him, and he is not expected to give more than what a man in his circumstances can give.

... Allah charges no soul save what He has given it; ... Allah expects no more from anyone than what they can possibly give, in wealth, just as in other things like physical capabilities. Thus the impoverished should not become distressed at not being able to give much, though there are many poor fathers who are sorrowful at not being able to give grandly for the suckling of their children.

... Allah shall place ease after hardship. After poverty comes wealth, and after humiliation comes grandeur, and after being lowly comes a lofty station, and so on in all affairs.

Upon the clarification of these rules, the theme now turns to explain that those who disobey these and other such rules are on the path of the previous peoples, who were destroyed on account of their transgressions and disobedience:

And how many a town has transgressed the command of its Lord and His Messengers; and so We reckoned it a severe reckoning, and We chastised it an atrocious chastisement. (8)

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِۦ فَحَاسَبْنَـٰهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَـٰهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨﴾

And how many a town has transgressed the command of its Lord and His Messengers; ... 'How many' is given for *ka ayyin*, which conveys the meaning that such townships were many. 'Town' (*qaryah*) means the people of the town; an instance of the inhabitants of a place being termed as the place itself. The overall sense is that many townships failed to obey the commands of Allah, glory be to Him, and the directions of His Messengers.

... and so We reckoned it a severe reckoning, ... This is in contrast to a gentle, indulgent reckoning, as the believer who performs the virtuous deeds is pardoned his sins and is subject to an easy, indulgent reckoning in reward for

his faith and his good deeds. But the transgressor faces the reckoning of each and every deed he has performed.

... and We chastised it an atrocious chastisement. An abominable and painful chastisement. Thus what is meant by their reckoning being strict was that they were subject to a reckoning as a group, not as individuals, for that reckoning is only after death, whereas here the theme implies that their reckoning was before their chastisement in the world.

So it tasted the mischief of its affair; and the consequence of its affair was loss. (9)

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَـٰقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ٩

Each of those townships was subjected to the consequences of its evil behaviour, and those consequences were that its inhabitants lost their world and they lost their hereafter.

Allah prepared for them a severe chastisement; so be guardful of Allah, O ye people of intellect who have believed. Allah surely has sent down to ye a reminder. (10)

أَعَدَّ ٱللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ فَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ يَـٰٓأُو۟لِى
ٱلْأَلْبَـٰبِ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ۚ قَدْ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ
ذِكْرًا ١٠

Allah prepared for them a severe chastisement; ... After their chastisement in the world they still have to face the chastisement of the hereafter, which is a severe chastisement. Therefore, be warned, and

... so be guardful of Allah, ... Fear His punishments.

... O ye owners of the mind... Be guardful towards Him, O ye of understanding, so that there not come to ye that which came to the previous communities.

... who have believed ... This phrase serves as an adjective for ‘ye endowed with minds’, for it is those who believe who will benefit from the warning.

... Allah has sent down to ye a reminder. His reminder reminds us of the force of Allah and His chastisement; and deviation is worse after having been reminded.

He then defines the reminder that He has sent down, glory be to Him:

A Messenger, reciting upon ye the signs of Allah, in clarification, so as to lead those who believe and do the virtuous deeds from the darknesses into the light. And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously – He enters him into gardens, rivers flowing under them, eternal in them, forever. Indeed Allah has granted him excellent provision! (11)

رَّسُولاً يَتۡلُواْ عَلَيۡكُمۡ ءَايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَٰتٖ لِّيُخۡرِجَ
ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ مِنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ
إِلَى ٱلنُّورِۚ وَمَن يُؤۡمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ وَيَعۡمَلۡ صَٰلِحٗا
يُدۡخِلۡهُ جَنَّٰتٖ تَجۡرِي مِن تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ
فِيهَآ أَبَدٗاۖ قَدۡ أَحۡسَنَ ٱللَّهُ لَهُۥ رِزۡقًا ١١

A Messenger, ... It means Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*. He is 'sent down' in the sense that he was sent by Allah, glory be to Him; and so the term is an instance of something spiritual being likened to something physical.

... reciting upon ye the signs of Allah, ... The Messenger recited to humankind His proofs and existential evidences and arguments.

... in clarification, ... Those signs made the reality clear. *And the reason he recited those signs that make things clear was:*

... so as to lead those who believe and do the virtuous deeds from the darknesses into the light ... 'Believe' means belief in Allah and His Messenger and what he brought. The 'darknesses' are the darknesses of disbelief and disobedience. The light is the light of faith and doing the virtuous deeds. Faith is likened to light as it enables a person to perceive the truth and reality in faith and action; for whoever believes there is no God or that the God has partners is in darkness and oblivious to reality, like the darkness of night that keeps him from seeing what is directly in from of him. Such a person is like one who drinks alcohol: he imagines that he is not being harmed, but he is in the darkness about the truth and reality; and the same applies in all the other beliefs and actions.

As for His word, 'lead those who believe', it means the believers prior to their believing. The description is used to clarify who they are, not that they believed and worked the virtuous deeds and yet were still to be led from the darknesses into the light – as is obvious.

... And whosoever believes in Allah and acts virtuously - He enters him into gardens under which rivers flow, eternal in them, forever ... When a person

believes in Allah with a real and correct faith, and performs the virtuous deeds, which includes refraining from the deeds of ugliness and corruption, then in the hereafter Allah will place him in the gardens of paradise under whose palaces and trees flow rivers of wine, honey, milk and sweet water. They will be eternal in them, and stay in them forever.

... indeed Allah has granted him excellent provision!' The sustenance of the person who believes and who does the virtuous deeds will be the height of beauty and excellence. He shall be provided and sustained with the fruits and drinks and spouses of paradise, and all the other requisites of the exalted lifestyle.

He then clarifies His attributes, glory be to Him, so that the disobedient fear Him, and the believer find confidence in His promise:

Allah is He who created seven skies, and of the earth the same as them, the command descending between them – for ye to know that Allah is over all things powerful, and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge. (12)

ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ سَبۡعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٖ وَمِنَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ
مِثۡلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ ٱلۡأَمۡرُ بَيۡنَهُنَّ لِتَعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَدۡ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيۡءٍ
عِلۡمَۢا ١٢

Allah is He who created seven skies, ... the skies here may be in reference to the planetary orbits, or suchlike.

... and of the earth the same as them, ... Seven. Imam Riḍā, *peace be upon him*, has said that 'an earth is surrounded by its sky; then an earth is surrounded by its sky; then an earth ... and so on until he counted seven.'

... the command descending between them ... Allah's command descends from each sky to its earth, until it reaches the final earth. And Allah created what He created – that of it perceived by man – in order:

... for ye to know that Allah is over all things powerful, ... Thus He is able to punish and reward, just as He is able to create the skies and the earths.

... and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge. The creation signifies His knowledge, and without knowledge there would be no creation, just as the process of creation, referred to in His word *'the command descending between them'*, indicates His knowledge, for such a procedure needs precise and detailed knowledge.

Surah al-Taḥrīm (66)

'The Banning'

سورة التحريم

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of a word derived from the root *al-taḥrīm*, meaning 'to prohibit' or 'to ban'. Like the other Madinan surahs it contains matters pertaining to the Islamic order, as well as matters of faith. While Surah al-Ṭalāq dealt largely with rules concerning women, this surah also explains matters concerning them.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We seek help by the name of the God who is the best of helpers to whoever seeks His help. And is there any more worthy from whom to seek help, when He is the Owner of all things?

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who bestows grace, bounty and beauty, and is able to do whatever He wishes.

O thou the Prophet, why ban thou what Allah made lawful for thee, reaching for the contentment of thy wives, while Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful? (1)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ أَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ لَكَۖ تَبۡتَغِي مَرۡضَاتَ أَزۡوَٰجِكَۚ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ۝١

O thou the Prophet, ... The address is to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

... why ban thou what Allah made lawful for thee, ... That is: why swear an oath forbidding thyself from some of that which Allah has made lawful for thee? To forbid oneself the lawful through such an oath is permitted, yet Allah uses this language to explain to the Messenger that his oath was annulled, so as to rebuke his wives ᶜĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah, who had annoyed the Messenger to the extent that he swore that which he swore.

It is narrated by Bukhārī, in his Ṣaḥīḥ – considered a standard work and a reference by the sect [known as Sunnis] – that ᶜĀ'ishah said: [vol. 3, page 136]

The Prophet used to go to stay with his wife Zaynab bint Jaḥsh and while he was staying with her, he used to take honey. So Ḥafṣah and myself conspired against her, that when he had been with her we would ask him if he had been eating *maghāfīr*, which is a gum that has a sweet taste but a foul smell, and we

would say that we found him to smell of it . . . He said, "No, though I have taken honey with Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, but I will never do so again, and this is an oath." And he asked me not to inform anyone about this.'

... reaching for the contentment of thy wives, ... That is: in forbidding thyself you seek to make thy wives pleased with thee. It has already been given concerning some āyāt that though in places a criticism is directed at the addressee, in fact the censure is being made of others.

... while Allah is oft-forgiving, ... He covers up the faults of His servants. The oath (of the prophet) needed to be annulled by higher authority before he could break it, so that people would not wonder at his breaking it. Having made the above oath, the prophet could not eat honey, and this surah was revealed to annul, in part, the oath of the prophet and therefore eating honey on the part of the prophet would not constitute a breaking of an oath.

... most merciful? He bestows mercy in addition to forgiveness.

Allah has ordained for ye the annulment of your oaths. Allah is your Guardian, and He is the Knowing, the Wise. (2)

قَدْ فَرَضَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَٰنِكُمْ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ مَوْلَىٰكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾

Allah has ordained for ye the annulment of your oaths ... It seems that the addressee is the Messenger, and that the plural is used out of respect, and it has been pointed out earlier that this is quite valid, and is a matter of eloquence. The meaning is that Allah made it obligatory for the Messenger to break his oath and not carry out that which he swore to. He was to take honey, for it was lawful for him; his oath not to take honey for the sake of pleasing some of his wives was annulled by Allah.

Allah is your Guardian, ... Therefore, just as the guardian of a slave – his owner – has the right to annul the oaths of the slave, so too the Prophet's oath was annulled by Allah.

... and He is the Knowing, the Wise. He knows His servant's interests, and is wise in what He orders and forbids him. Indeed, when the benefit of a thing is known it will be found to accord to His command. Honey was lawful for the Messenger, and that was wise and in his interests.

The theme then turns to explain another dimension of the affair, in His word:

And when the Prophet confided unto one of his wives an account, so when she announced it and Allah manifested it for him, he made known some of it and overlooked some. And when he announced it to her she said, 'Who announced this to thee?' He said, 'The Knowing, the Informed, announced it to me.' (3)

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ ٱلنَّبِىُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَٰجِهِۦ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا
نَبَّأَتْ بِهِۦ وَأَظْهَرَهُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُۥ
وَأَعْرَضَ عَنۢ بَعْضٍۖ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِۦ قَالَتْ مَنْ
أَنۢبَأَكَ هَٰذَاۖ قَالَ نَبَّأَنِىَ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ٱلْخَبِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

And ... It means: 'And (or 'So') recount, O Messenger,' the point being, perhaps, to convey something of how the Messenger was irritated by his wives just as he was irritated by others, so as to embarrass them for having vexed him.

... when the Prophet confided unto one of his wives an account, ... It refers to his confiding in them that he had forbidden himself honey. 'one of his wives' refers to ^{c}Ā'ishah, or Ḥafṣah. Probably the reason for the Prophet wishing to keep the affair secret was so that people would not go around saying that he had forbidden himself something just to please his wives.

... so when she announced it ... It means that the wife disclosed the secret to another woman. It is recorded among the Sunnis that the Prophet informed ^{c}Ā'ishah of his oath and ordered her to keep it a secret, but she disobeyed and informed Ḥafṣah.

... and Allah manifested it for him, ... Allah informed His Prophet of what had transpired between the two women and that his secret had been disclosed.

... he made known some of it ... The prophet told ^{c}Ā'ishah some of what he knew she had told Ḥafṣah. In doing so he wanted to point to her that she had disobeyed him in disclosing his secret.

... and overlooked some ... It is an aspect of magnanimous ethics not to remind the sinner of the whole of their sinning, but simply to hint at it so as to reform. Letting such things pass in such circumstances is of the ethics of the great.

... And when he announced it to her... That is, when the Messenger informed ^{c}Ā'ishah of that which Allah, glory be to Him, had informed him, that she had disclosed his secret to Ḥafṣah:

... she said, 'Who announced this to thee?... ᶜĀ'ishah was amazed at how the Prophet knew she had disclosed his secret.

... he said, ... That is, the Prophet said in reply:

... 'The Knowing, the Informed announced it to me.' 'The Knowing' (*al-ᶜalīm*) means He who is knowing of every thing and every affair. 'The Informed' (*al-khabīr*) emphasises that He is informed of the most minute details of every affair.

The address then turns to deliver a warning to ᶜĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah, for their having drawn up such a plot:

Whether you two repent unto Allah (or not), for indeed your hearts have swerved. And if you combine against him – then indeed Allah is his Protector, and Gabriel and the virtuous of the believers, and the angels after that are in support. (4)

إِن تَتُوبَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ فَقَدۡ صَغَتۡ قُلُوبُكُمَا ۖ وَإِن تَظَٰهَرَا عَلَيۡهِ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ مَوۡلَىٰهُ وَجِبۡرِيلُ وَصَٰلِحُ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ۖ وَٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾

Whether you two repent unto Allah (or not), ... That is, whether you two women were to repent for your annoying the Messenger, and for your stratagems against him, or not, it is of no consequence.

... for indeed your hearts have swerved ... That is, your hearts had deviated to sin and falsehood, [whereas remorse, and inclining to the truth is a prerequisite for repentance]. 'swerved' is given for *ṣaghat* which means to incline [to falsehood][23].

... And if ye combine against him, … That is, if you back up and support each other against the prophet,

… then verily Allah is his Protector, ... Then your scheme against him would not harm him, for indeed the Almighty Allah is his supporter and aid, who has taken on Himself his protection, so as to annul any plot or stratagem drawn up against him.

---

[23] The only other occasion the term *ṣagha* is used in the holy Qur'an, it is also in the context of 'inclination to falsehood'; ﴾*So that the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter swerve to it (falsehood) and be contend with it and perpetrate what they are perpetrating.*﴿ [6:113].

... and Gabriel ... Gabriel too is the Messenger's ally, informing him from Allah of what is planned against him.

... and the virtuous of the believers, ... By this is meant the 'virtuous believer' as a type; all such believers support the Messenger against the conspiracies and alliances made against him. [According to many hadith by 'virtuous of the believers' it is meant Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali *peace be upon him.*][24]

... and the angels after that are in support. It means after the support of Allah, and of Gabriel and the virtuous believers, the angels too are behind the Messenger, supporting and backing him up.

The theme then turns to belittle their importance, for the Messenger of Allah was free to divorce them, so that their plot would rebound against them, and they would be divorced. For were he to divorce them, he would not remain without a wife, for Allah would marry him to women better than them:

Mayhap his Lord, if he divorces ye, will substitute for him wives better than ye: muslims, believers, subservient, penitent, devout, wayfarers, previously married and virgins. (5)

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُۥٓ إِن طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَن يُبْدِلَهُۥٓ أَزْوَٰجًا خَيْرًا مِّنكُنَّ مُسْلِمَٰتٍ مُّؤْمِنَٰتٍ قَٰنِتَٰتٍ تَٰٓئِبَٰتٍ عَٰبِدَٰتٍ سَٰٓئِحَٰتٍ ثَيِّبَٰتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا ﴿٥﴾

Mayhap... It is given for *ᶜasā*, indicating a strong probability.

... his Lord, if he divorces ye, ... 'Ye', here, is the feminine plural. It may mean the two of them or it may mean all of them, for narrations mention others besides those two.

... will substitute for him wives better than ye: ... It means better in faith and better in respecting the rights of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

The type of woman meant is then described, as a criticism of his erring wives:

... muslims, ... It means women whose Islam is complete.

... believers, ... Islam is to submit, whereas belief (*īmān*) is a special condition of Islam, as He says, *'The Arabs say, "We believe!" Say: "ye have not*

---

[24] as reported in al-Dur al-Manthūr. Other prominent Sunni scholars report many such hadith, which state that by 'virtuous believers' is meant Ali son of Abi-Talib.

believed, rather say 'We have submitted' for belief has not yet entered into your hearts.' [49: 14].

... subservient, ... It means women who are obedient to Allah, humble before the Messenger.

... penitent, ... It means that they repent of the sins they occasionally commit, and do not persist in them.

... worshippers, ... It means that they worship Allah, glory be to Him, over and above that which is obligatory.

... wayfarers, ... It is put for *sā'iḥāt*, meaning that they often fast, for the Messenger has said, *'The wayfaring of my community is the fast.'* Or it means that they proceed in the command of Allah and His Prophet, like the wayfarer who travels the Earth.

... previously married and virgins. This was the condition of the Messenger's wives; some had previously been married, others had not.

The theme then directs itself to humankind as a whole, that they cultivate and discipline their womenfolk. It is said that the obligation of preaching mounts from oneself to the general population, as far as one is able, in five āyāt:

1. *Oneself, in His word:* ﴿... be careful of yourselves, that one who deviates harm ye not, after your being guided.﴾ [5:105].
2. *One's household, in His word:* ﴿... guard yourselves and your folks from a fire..﴾, the following verse
3. *One's kinsmen, in His word:* ﴿And warn your nearest kinsmen.﴾ [26:214].
4. *One's townsmen, in His word:* ﴿... and that they warn their people when they return to them.﴾ [9:123]
5. *Mankind as a whole, in His word:* ﴿And We sent thee not but to the whole of mankind...﴾ [34:28] *considering that the Messenger' is a model; and in His word:* ﴿and that there be a community among ye calling to the good.﴾ [3:104]

O ye who believe, guard yourselves and your folks from a fire whose fuel is men and stones, over it are angels stern and severe –they do not disobey Allah

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا ٱلنَّاسُ وَٱلْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَـٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ

in what He commands them, and they do what they are commanded. (6)

شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعۡصُونَ ٱللَّهَ مَآ أَمَرَهُمۡ وَيَفۡعَلُونَ مَا يُؤۡمَرُونَ ۝٦

O ye who believe, guard yourselves and your folks... The imperative is in the masculine plural. 'Folks' is put for *ahlī* plural of *ahl.* It means a man's wife or wives, his children, his brothers and suchlike.

... from a fire... it means the fire of hell, which has the following characteristics:

... whose fuel is men and stones, ... These are its fuel, for their burning strengthens the fire, on account of the greasiness of the former and the hard solidity of the latter.

... over it are angels stern; ... It means the fire is in the charge of angels who are rough of heart, and will have mercy on no one.

... and severe... They are firm of body and extremely strong, able to do whatever is expected of them.

... they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, ... They will not disobey Allah, glory be to Him, in the commands He gives them to chastise humans by the fire. They will not accept bribes, and they will not give way to sympathy for the disbelievers.

... and they do what they are commanded. It means in that which Allah commands them to do. The phrase emphasises the former 'they disobey not'.

As the disbelievers enter the fire, they take to excusing themselves for their previous actions, and so it shall be said to them:

'O ye who disbelieve, seek not to be excused this day, ye are only being recompensed for what ye did.' (7)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَا تَعۡتَذِرُواْ ٱلۡيَوۡمَۖ إِنَّمَا تُجۡزَوۡنَ مَا كُنتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُونَ ۝٧

Reminded that they disbelieved while they were in the world, they are told that now they are in the fire it is too late for them to repent, and that the fire is the recompense of their works, and that excusing themselves will do them no good.

Now, as the believers have been made knowing of the characteristics of the fire, it is for them to repent of their disobedience while they are still in the world, so that they will not be made to enter it:

O ye who believe, repent unto Allah in a sincere repentance; maybe your Lord will annul your evils and enter ye into gardens, rivers flowing beneath them, on the day He will not humiliate the Prophet and those who believed with him – their light goes on before them and from their right hands. They say, ‘O Lord, complete for us our light and forgive us, indeed Thou are over all things powerful.’ (8)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ تُوبُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ تَوۡبَةٗ
نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمۡ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنكُمۡ سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمۡ
وَيُدۡخِلَكُمۡ جَنَّٰتٖ تَجۡرِي مِن تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ
يَوۡمَ لَا يُخۡزِي ٱللَّهُ ٱلنَّبِيَّ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مَعَهُۥۖ
نُورُهُمۡ يَسۡعَىٰ بَيۡنَ أَيۡدِيهِمۡ وَبِأَيۡمَٰنِهِمۡ يَقُولُونَ
رَبَّنَآ أَتۡمِمۡ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَٱغۡفِرۡ لَنَآۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ ٨

O ye who believe, repent unto Allah ... Repent of your disobeying Him, and return to His obedience.

... in a sincere repentance; ... Such repentance should be sincerely for His sake. ‘sincere’, which implies honesty, is put for *naṣūḥ,* which in fact means to be ‘extremely sincere in giving advice’. Therefore, as an adjective for repentance itself it is figurative; what is meant is that the penitent should be honest and forthcoming in advising and urging himself to repent. When a person is thus ‘honest’ in repenting, it means that he feels the greatest regret at having defied and disobeyed, and finds the strongest determination not to do such actions in the future, and to carry out the requisites of repentance – the discharge of a lapsed duty (*qaḍā*), paying the penalties (*kaffārah*) and restoring people’s rights, and suchlike.

... maybe your Lord will annul your evils... It means that it is likely He will erase the effects of the acts of disobedience, which are called ‘evils’ (*sayyi’āt*) as they do the perpetrator harm.

... and enter ye into gardens, rivers flowing beneath them, ... Gardens under whose trees and palaces flow rivers of honey and wine and milk and water.

The repentant will be placed within the Gardens:

... on the day He will not humiliate the Prophet and those who believed with him... The penitents will not be humiliated by being placed in the fire. The matter is put in this way to encourage us to make ourselves enter into that distinguished company.

... their light goes on before them and from their right hands ... There will be a light emanating from their faces and from their right hands – in which they are given their book of deeds – dispelling the darkness of the rising-ground, and when they walk, the light will shine in front of them and to their right.

... They say, 'O Lord, complete for us our light ... They ask that their light be made brighter, and continue until the end of the day of resurrection. Or it is their prayer while they are in the world, asking that they be blessed with whatever strengthens their light, and that it persist and not be put out by their disbelieving or committing acts of disobedience.

... and forgive us, indeed Thou are over all things powerful.' He is able to complete the believer's light, and able to forgive, and this praise of Allah, glory be to Him, is a part of the believer's supplication, because a supplication that contains praise of Him, glory be to Him, is nearer to acceptance.

O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be stern with them. And their abode is hell; and vile is the destination! (9)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ جَٰهِدِ ٱلْكُفَّارَ وَٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ وَٱغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَىٰهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿٩﴾

O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers... They are to be struggled against through war and fighting.

... and the hypocrites ... They are to be fought with deterrence and prevention.

... and be stern with them ... The war and deterrence is to be firm, solid and strict, for tenderness is for those who are going straight and balanced, while those who are deviated need severity for them to be put aright.

... And their abode is hell; and atrocious is the destination! What a place to be heading for, since it is a place of punishment and chastisement.

The theme now turns to coin some likenesses for the wives of the Messenger, explaining that the best husband cannot benefit his wife when she deviates, just as a corrupt husband does not harm his wife when she is straight, guided

by the obedience of Allah and His Messenger and not driven by the desires of disobedience:

Allah coins an example for those who have disbelieved: the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot; they were under two of our virtuous servants but they betrayed them, and so they enriched them not against Allah. And it was said: 'Enter into the fire along with those entering.' (10)

ضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلٗا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ ٱمۡرَأَتَ نُوحٖ
وَٱمۡرَأَتَ لُوطٖۖ كَانَتَا تَحۡتَ عَبۡدَيۡنِ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا
صَٰلِحَيۡنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمۡ يُغۡنِيَا عَنۡهُمَا مِنَ
ٱللَّهِ شَيۡـٔٗا وَقِيلَ ٱدۡخُلَا ٱلنَّارَ مَعَ ٱلدَّٰخِلِينَ ١٠

Allah coins an example for those who have disbelieved:... So as to explain that the best virtue of spouses will not benefit their partners.

... the woman of *Noah (Nūḥ) and the woman of Lot (Lūṭ); they were under ...* It means under the supervision of:

... two of our virtuous servants ... Noah and Lot, *peace be upon them*, who were Allah's Messengers, and who could be more virtuous than that?

... but they betrayed them, ... They betrayed them in religion, for they were hypocrites who troubled and vexed their husbands.

... and so they enriched them not against Allah, ... Noah and Lot, *peace be upon them,* did not benefit those women against the chastisement of Allah in the slightest way, by reducing it, not even a part of it.

... and it was said:... That is, to those two women when they died.

... 'Enter into the fire along with those entering.' Despite the fact that they were wives of Messengers, they still faced the chastisement of the fire. In this is a clear allusion to ᶜĀ'ishah and Ḥafṣah, who vexed the Prophet.

And Allah coins an example for those who believe: Pharaoh's woman, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me a house by Thee in the garden, and rescue me from the Pharaoh and his work, and rescue me from the wrongful people.' (11)

وَضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلٗا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱمۡرَأَتَ
فِرۡعَوۡنَ إِذۡ قَالَتۡ رَبِّ ٱبۡنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيۡتٗا فِي
ٱلۡجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِن فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَعَمَلِهِۦ وَنَجِّنِي
مِنَ ٱلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ١١

And Allah coins a metaphor for those who have believed: ... This is to show that faith benefits the believer even when under the control of the most disbelieving of people.

... Pharaoh's woman, ... Āsyah daughter of Muzāḥim, who believed in Moses while her husband claimed to be Lord of the worlds, saying that he was the Most High Lord.

... when she said, ... In her prayers to Allah.

... "***My Lord, build for me a house by Thee in the garden***, ***...***" Thus she expressed her lack of all hope in the world, and that she worked not for its sake.

... and rescue me from the Pharaoh and his work, and rescue me from the wrongful people." i.e. the followers and entourage of Pharaoh. And Allah answered her prayer, for He received her and placed her inside the gardens of paradise, and the works of her husband did her no harm.

And now Allah, glory be to Him, recounts for the believers the example of a woman who was not harmed by what people said of her, for she was pure and noble. Thus He shows that the actions of others and their evil words have no effect whatsoever on those who believe, when they are believing and virtuous:

And Mary daughter of ᶜImran, who guarded her chastity, and so We blew into it of Our spirit; and she confirmed the words of her Lord and His books, and was among the subservient. (12)

وَمَرْيَمَ ٱبْنَتَ عِمْرَٰنَ ٱلَّتِىٓ أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَـٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِۦ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ ٱلْقَـٰنِتِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

And... It means that Allah coins the example of:

... Mary daughter of ᶜImrān, who guarded her chastity ... Thus the āyah belies God's enemies the Jews, who said about her what is more true and more appropriate of themselves.

... and so We blew into it of Our spirit; ... The spirit is said to be of Allah, as a mark of honour, just as the Kaᶜbah is the 'House of Allah'. As a result Jesus, *peace be upon him*, was conceived. And it was Gabriel, *peace be upon him*, who blew into the body of Mary, by His order, glory be to Him.

... and she confirmed the words of her Lord and His books, ... It means that she followed the teachings revealed to the Prophets, in beliefs and practices.

... and was among the subservient. She lived among the devotees of the temple of Jerusalem. So if a woman has a husband she should strive to be like the Pharaoh's wife; and if she is without husband then like Mary the Truthful, *peace be upon her*.

Surah al-Mulk (67) 'The Dominion'

سورة الملك

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *mulk*, meaning 'dominion'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the principal articles of faith, including divinity, prophethood, and resurrection. As Surah al-Taḥrīm concluded on the theme of family relations being neither of benefit nor of harm, but that it is actions which benefit and do harm, this surah opens on the theme of mankind being in a position of examination, for the obedient to be discerned from the disobedient.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... We begin by the name of Allah who is the First in existence, the Creator of all things, so that the beginning by His name accords to His being the point of origin and the First.

...the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on the servants in this world and in the hereafter; completing their shortcomings, forgiving their sins.

Hallowed is He in whose hand is the dominion, and He is over all things powerful; (1)

تَبَـٰرَكَ ٱلَّذِى بِيَدِهِ ٱلْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

Hallowed is He ... Hallowed is given for *tabāraka*, meaning to persist in goodness and be the source of goodness. From the same root is the word *barakah*, 'blessedness'.

... in whose hand is the dominion, ... His is the dominion for He is the Owner without condition of everything in existence; every owner besides Him has been granted possession by Him. 'In His hand' is an instance of likening the metaphysical to the physical.

... and He is over all things powerful. He is able to create a thing, able to destroy it, and able to dispose of it in whatever way He likes.

He who created death and life so as to test ye – which of ye are the best in action; and He is the Mighty, the oft-Forgiving: (2)

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْمَوْتَ وَٱلْحَيَوٰةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

He created death, ... Death either exists in itself, or it is the absence of the blessing of life; both of these conditions are created, for the absence of life in a thing is a part of being, as is established in theology *(ᶜilm al-kalam).*

... and life so as to test ye – which of ye are the best in action; ... He created life and death, O mankind, to test you, to evaluate you, as to which of you is better in actions than the other. For Allah, glory be to Him, is perfectly aware of the human being, the examination is solely for His knowledge to be realised in the objective world, for He does not need to try us and know us by experience. Giving death and life as being for the sake of examination is on account of how death calls us to good deeds and leads us to put no assurance in the transient world and its temporary pleasures, while life empowers the human being to perform the beautiful deeds.

... and He is the Mighty, ... He is the Mighty *(al-ᶜaziz),* dominant in His authority,

... the oft-Forgiver: It is put for *al-Ghafur.* He forgives the sinner when he repents and returns; so you, O mankind, are in His grasp, for He is the Grand and Mighty; so seek His forgiveness and He will forgive you, for He is the Forgiver.

Who created the seven skies in levels; thou see not in the creation of the Compassionate any incongruity; so redirect thy gaze: see thou any cracks? (3)	ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبۡعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٖ طِبَاقٗاۖ مَّا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلۡقِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ مِن تَفَٰوُتٖۖ فَٱرۡجِعِ ٱلۡبَصَرَ هَلۡ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٖ ٣

Who created the seven skies in levels; ... The skies exist one above the other in perfect symmetry, with no incongruity or disharmony.

... thou see not in the creation of the Compassionate ... The address is in the singular to the listener as an individual.

... any incongruity; ... Three is no disorder, in the creation of the Compassionate (al-Raḥman), for the whole is created with precision, certitude and appropriate perfection.

... so redirect thy gaze ... Turn it once more to existence, after it was directed at it. It is as if the addressee had been looking but without attention, so it is said, 'Redirect your gaze', meaning 'scrutinize and examine'.

... see thou any cracks? Do you see any cracks, any fissures, as you would in a building that gives way to imperfection? Is there in the world of existence any disorder indicating weakness and inability, or is everything in its appropriate place according to a wisdom and beneficence?

Then redirect thy gaze twice again; thy gaze will return to thee low, while it is weary. (4)

ثُمَّ ٱرْجِعِ ٱلْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾

... Then redirect thy gaze twice again; ... That is, once and then again, meaning again and again, for vision sometimes errs in looking once at a thing and does not see its faults, so that when a person looks again and again at a thing he perceives its faults. Thus the meaning is to take another look at the creation, again seeking to find disorder, you will not find it.

... thy gaze will return to thee low, while it is weary ... Your gaze will return to you low, unable to meet its objective and find what it was seeking; it will tire without finding any disorder or weakness – and what illness and suchlike it finds is for the purpose of examination and instruction, not due to a fault in the creation.

And most surely We have adorned the world's sky with lamps, and We have made them launching-sites for the devils, and We have prepared for them the chastisement of the blaze. (5)

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا ٱلسَّمَآءَ ٱلدُّنْيَا بِمَصَٰبِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَٰهَا رُجُومًا لِّلشَّيَٰطِينِ ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ ٱلسَّعِيرِ ﴿٥﴾

And most surely We have adorned the world's sky with lamps, ... The 'sky' *(al-samā')* nearest the earth has been adorned, beautified – which does not mean that the other skies are not beautiful; the distinction is made on account of how it is witnessed and perceived. 'Lamps' is put for *maṣābīḥ*, plural of *miṣbāḥ,* and what are meant are the stars, although for the naked eye planets are also 'seen' as lamps just as the stars are.

... and We have made them launching-sites for the devils, ... 'launching-sites' is given for *rujūm*, derivative of *rajm* or stoning, and what is meant is sites for launching missiles. As the devils approach the stations of the angels in the lofty skies to eavesdrop, they are stoned with flaming particles from the stars. For the stars are vantage points, from which the devils are kept under

observation, so that when they approach they are stoned or fired upon, as was earlier discussed in previous surahs.

... and We have prepared for them the chastisement of the blaze. Prepared for these devils who eavesdrop is a fiery chastisement of the blaze *(al-sa^{c}īr);* flaming, blazing, either with their being fired upon, or in the hereafter in the fire.

And just as this is the punishment of the devils so it is the punishment of the disbelievers:

And for those who disbelieve in their Lord is the chastisement of Hell, and atrocious is the destination; (6)

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِرَبِّهِمۡ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَۖ وَبِئۡسَ ٱلۡمَصِيرُ ٦

For those who disbelieve by denying Him, or by attributing to Him what is not His, is the chastisement of Hell, an atrocious, vile place to return to.

When they are cast therein they hear from it a braying as it boils, (7)

إِذَآ أُلۡقُواْ فِيهَا سَمِعُواْ لَهَا شَهِيقٗا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ ٧

When they are cast therein ... Those who cast them into the hell are the angels.

... they hear from it a braying ... As they are flung into it they hear its roar, like the braying of an ass. This sound accompanies the other terrors of hell so as to increase alarm and dread in the hearts.

... as it boils, ... Hell is boiling, and this too increases its dread.

Almost bursting with rage – whenever a troop is hurled into it, its keepers ask them: 'Did there not come to ye a warner?' (8)

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ ٱلۡغَيۡظِۖ كُلَّمَآ أُلۡقِيَ فِيهَا فَوۡجٞ سَأَلَهُمۡ خَزَنَتُهَآ أَلَمۡ يَأۡتِكُمۡ نَذِيرٞ ٨

Almost bursting with rage ... It will be as if the hell will be almost splitting apart with rage, such will be the severity of its flames. Man is such that when he is enraged he comes close to exploding and bursting his skin, and so will the fire come close to bursting under the pressure of its own flames.

... whenever a troop is hurled into it, its keepers ... Its keepers are the angels assigned to the fire.

... ask them: 'Did there not come to ye a warner?' They ask every band of disbelievers and sinners whether no one came to them to warn and frighten them of this fire. The questioning form is for reproach and censure.

They say, 'For sure! A warner came to us but we belied and said 'Allah has not sent down a thing, ye are but in a great straying.' (9)

قَالُوا۟ بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ
ٱللَّهُ مِن شَىْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِى ضَلَٰلٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٩﴾

They say, ... That is, the guilty will say in reply to the keepers of the fire.

... 'For sure! A warner came to us ... They admit that a Prophet or Messenger sent by Allah, glory be to Him, came to them.

... but we belied and said 'Allah has not sent down a thing, ... They will admit that they called this Day and all that the warners told them false; and said that no book or law had descended from Allah.

... ye are but in a great straying.' They had told their warners that they were in serious error for believing that they were Allah's messengers, and that Allah had sent down to them authority and a law.

And they say, 'Had we but listened or reasoned, we would not be among the companions of the blaze.' (10)

وَقَالُوا۟ لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِىٓ
أَصْحَٰبِ ٱلسَّعِيرِ ﴿١٠﴾

Those for the fire acknowledge that they did not make use of their minds while in the world, and thus they are afflicted with the chastisement.

And they say, 'Had we but listened or reasoned, ... Had we only listened to the words of the warners, they say, or had only we employed our reason so as to discern the true and the false by listening – for man is such that when he employs his reason he will of necessity perceive the truth in general terms, even though he hear not a thing.

... we would not be among the companions of the blaze.' Then, they say, we would not be here amongst the people of the blaze.

So they acknowledge their sin, and so away with the companions of the blaze! (11)

فَٱعْتَرَفُوا۟ بِذَنۢبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِّأَصْحَٰبِ ٱلسَّعِيرِ
﴿١١﴾

So they acknowledge their sin, ... Those who are being entered into the fire acknowledge their faults, at a time when confession is to no avail.

... and so away with the companions of the blaze! 'So away' is given for *suḥqan*, a supplication against them, meaning 'may Allah remove them far from salvation.'

But as for the believer who acts righteousness, he is in goodness and felicity:

Indeed those who are in awe of their Lord though unseen, theirs is forgiveness and a large wage. (12)	إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَخۡشَوۡنَ رَبَّهُم بِٱلۡغَيۡبِ لَهُم مَّغۡفِرَةٞ وَأَجۡرٞ كَبِيرٞ ١٢

Indeed those who are in awe of their Lord though unseen, ... Those who fear Him, glory be to Him, even though He is beyond their senses, fear to disobey Him and remain obedient.

... theirs is forgiveness ... For them is the forgiveness of the sins they have committed.

... and a large wage. A great reward.

The thread then turns to explain the knowledge of Allah, glory be to Him, of everything the human being says, whether it is uttered in public or in private:

And be secretive with your word or be open with it, He is knower of what is in the breasts. (13)	وَأَسِرُّواْ قَوۡلَكُمۡ أَوِ ٱجۡهَرُواْ بِهِۦٓۖ إِنَّهُۥ عَلِيمُۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ ١٣

And be secretive with your word ... Speak, O people, the word that is in your breasts, privately and secretively.

... or be open with it ... Allah, glory be to Him, is aware of it before it leaves your lips.

... He is knower of what holds the breasts. He is aware of what is in your hearts. He knows what thoughts circulate in your very breasts. 'Breasts' *(ṣudūr)* is mentioned as the breast is the location of the heart, and that is where thoughts are. So how can one be aware of what is in the heart and yet unaware of what leaves the lips?

It is narrated that the polytheists would say foul things about the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and his family[25]*, and that archangel Gabriel (Jabra'īl) peace be upon him*[26]*, informed him of what they said. So when one of them wanted to talk about him, they would tell each other to speak quietly so that Muhammad would not hear of it. And so this āyah was sent down:*

Does He not know whom He created, while He is the all-Subtle, the well-Informed? (14)

أَلَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ ٱللَّطِيفُ ٱلۡخَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

Does He not know whom He created ... Does He not know the concealed and the open of whom He has created? The question form is to have the effect of denial. The meaning is: 'How can Allah not know about things while He is the creator?'

... while He is the all-Subtle, ... 'All-Subtle' is given for *laṭīf,* for a *laṭīf* thing is one that influences penetrates things with ease. His describing Himself, glory be to Him, as 'the Laṭīf', is on account of the penetration of His knowledge and power.

... and He is the well-informed? 'Well-Informed', is given for 'Khabīr' to indicate precise, and thorough knowledge about everything. 'Khabīr' reflects a more detailed knowledge than *ᶜĀlim,* 'knower'.

(It is) He who put the earth lowly for ye, so walk among its uplands and eat of His provision; and unto Him is the dispersal. (15)

هُوَ ٱلَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ ذَلُولٗا فَٱمۡشُواْ فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُواْ مِن رِّزۡقِهِۦۖ وَإِلَيۡهِ ٱلنُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾

He it is who put the earth lowly for ye, ... The earth has been made malleable for you, O mankind, subordinate, for buildings, agriculture, burying the dead, journeying, the passage of rivers and canals, and other things. 'Lowly' is given for *dhalūlan*, from *dhalla*, meaning to be humble, to yield.

[25] *ṣallallah ᶜalayhi wa ālih,* meaning may Allah bless him and his family. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

[26] *ᶜalayhis-salām,* meaning peace be upon him. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of one of the prophets or one of the angels, or one of the *maᶜsūm* Imams from (the Ahl al-Bayt) the household of the Holy Prophet.

... so walk among its uplands ... 'Uplands' is a literal meaning of *manākib*, and what are meant are the earth's paths.

... and eat of His provision; ... We are to eat of His provision, which we acquire through agriculture and suchlike.

... and unto Him is the dispersal. We are raised and dispersed after death towards Him, glory be to Him, for He is the origin and the return. The meaning of the rising being to Him *(ilayhi)* is that it is to His reckoning and recompense.

The thread then turns from mentioning the favours of Allah for man to be grateful, to warning them that by remaining in disbelief and disobedience they advance themselves towards the chastisement; and that the force driving man to the good can be ease or adversity.

Are ye secure that whoso is in the sky would not make the earth to swallow ye, when suddenly it is sliding? (16)

ءَأَمِنتُم مَّن فِي ٱلسَّمَآءِ أَن يَخۡسِفَ بِكُمُ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ ﴿١٦﴾

'Are ye secure' is given for *'amintum'* which in this case means 'are you sure' or 'do you have guarantee'. 'Whoso is in the sky', *man fil-samā'*, are the angels assigned to our affairs by Allah, glory be to Him. Do ye (O mankind) have guarantee that they will not make the earth slide about and envelop us, as they did with Qārūn and the people of Lot? It is possible that 'whoso is in the sky' means Allah, glory be to Him, and His being in the sky means that His command for the earth issues from the sky, as He says, *'...it is He who is God in the sky and God in the earth.'* [43: 84]. And He says*, 'And in the sky is your provision and that ye are promised ...'* [51: 22]

Or are ye secure that whoso is in the sky would not send hails of pebbles, then ye will know how is My warning. (17)

أَمۡ أَمِنتُم مَّن فِي ٱلسَّمَآءِ أَن يُرۡسِلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ حَاصِبٗاۖ فَسَتَعۡلَمُونَ كَيۡفَ نَذِيرِ ﴿١٧﴾

Or are ye secure that whoso is in the sky would not send hails of pebbles, ... Again, do they have security, if they remain in their disbelief and disobedience, that one of the above two meanings of *man fil-samā'*, will not send against them torrents of stones, until they are stoned to death like earlier disobedient peoples?

... then ye will know how is My warning. They would then know that the warning of Allah about the chastisement is true.

And such was not remote from the disbelievers; did they not know that when the previous peoples belied they were afflicted with such punishments?

And in fact those before them certainly belied, so how was My denial? (18)

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿١٨﴾

And in fact those before them certainly belied, ... Previous peoples called the portents and Prophets of Allah false.

... so how was My denial? Allah's denial against them was His chastising them with various chastisements: by drowning, by being swallowed up by the ground, by being stoned from the sky, and suchlike.

How could they deny the existence of Allah or His power, while they are witnesses to the signs of creation with their eyes?

See they not the bird above them: spreading and folding? None holds them but the Compassionate; indeed He is over all things an observer. (19)

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا۟ إِلَى ٱلطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَـٰٓفَّـٰتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ۚ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنُ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍۭ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

See they not the bird above them: spreading and folding? ... Do the disbelievers not use their eyes to see the bird and how it uses its wings; its wings outstretched as it flies through the sky above their heads, then contracting them. One moment its wings are aligned and extended, the next moment contracted, which is the flapping of its wings. By the bird is meant the species, and so it is spoken of in the plural.

... None holds them but the Compassionate; truly He is over every thing an observer ... They are not held up in the sky while gliding or flapping, save by the grace of the Compassionate, who bestows mercy on all things. Who has given the bird this ability, and given the sky the quality of bearing the bird, other than Allah, glory be to Him?

... indeed He over all things He is an observer: He knows what is appropriate for all things and what will benefit all things, and so He creates according to

benefit and wisdom. And according to His vision, glory be to Him, He gave the bird this ability and the sky this quality. An observer *(baṣīr)* in the āyah means being aware of affairs, rather than seeing.

Or who is it that is an army for ye, succouring ye bedsides the Compassionate? Indeed the disbelievers are nought but in delusion. (20)	أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا ٱلَّذِى هُوَ جُندٌ لَّكُمْ يَنصُرُكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ۚ إِنِ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ إِلَّا فِى غُرُورٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

Or who is it that is an army for ye, succouring ye bedsides the Compassionate? ... The question form is for denial. The meaning is: who do you suppose will be an army for you to save you on the day of resurrection from the chastisement of Allah? You have no such army. It is as if it is said to the disbelievers: 'By what power do you rebel against Allah? Have you an army to defend you against Allah's chastisement, which you depend upon in disobeying Him?'

... Indeed the disbelievers are nought but in delusion ... The disbelievers have no such army, the life of the world has deceived them. For they are nothing but in delusion. The devil has deluded them into believing that there is no punishment and no chastisement, so let them depend on him in disbelief and disobedience.

Or who is it that will provision ye should He withhold His provision? Nay, they persist in insolence and aversion. (21)	أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا ٱلَّذِى يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُۥ ۚ بَل لَّجُّوا۟ فِى عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ ﴿٢١﴾

Or who is it that will provision you should He withhold His provision? ... If Allah withheld His provision would there be one to provision you? Could such a one take the place of Allah in providing for you? Since there is no provider other than Him, how do you disobey Him and not fear that He might withhold His provision of you so that you would remain without provision and without food?

... Nay, they persist in insolence and aversion ... Nay, they know full well that there is no provider other than Allah, yet they persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, in insolence *(ᶜutuw)* and aversion *(nufūr)* to Islam and to the truth.

Is he who walks crawling on his face more guided, or he who walks evenly on a straight road? (22)	أَفَمَن يَمْشِى مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِۦٓ أَهْدَىٰٓ أَمَّن يَمْشِى سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

Is he who walks crawling on his face more guided, ... ‘Crawling’ is given for *mukibb*, meaning to walk along with one's face and belly on the ground, with utmost difficulty. Is such a person better and more knowledgeable to turn to for a path?

... or he who walks evenly on a straight road? ... That is, he who walks evenly and upright on his two feet. Is the former more guided, or he who is on the straight road, the road that leads most directly to salvation? The disbeliever is like someone who goes about upon his face and belly, and his path is rough and difficult, with him not knowing how to escape the problems and afflictions. The believer, by contrast, sees his path clearly and easily, walks along it and quickly arrives at his intended destination. For the straight path is the shortest distance to felicity and bliss.

Say: He it is who produced ye, and He made for ye the ear and the eyes and the hearts; little are ye thankful. (23)

قُلْ هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْأَبْصَٰرَ وَٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةَ ۖ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Say: ... The address is to the Messenger.

... He it is who produced ye, ... He was to say to those who denied Allah, glory be to Him, or assigned to Him partners, that Allah, One and Alone, caused them to exist.

... and He made for ye the ear and the eyes and the hearts; ... He made for our benefit the ear, the eyes and the hearts. It seems the singular is used for the ear and the plural for the eyes and the hearts for variety in expression.

... little are ye thankful. After these great gifts the appreciation is insignificant.

Say: He it is who multiplied ye in the earth, and to Him ye will be mustered. (24)

قُلْ هُوَ ٱلَّذِى ذَرَأَكُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say: ... The address is in the singular.

... He it is who multiplied ye in the earth ... It means: say, O Messenger of Allah, to your opponents: Allah, One and Alone, created you through procreation and birth throughout the earth, and settled you upon it.

... and to Him ye will be mustered. To Him is the final gathering – that is, to His reckoning and paradise we are to be raised and mustered together on the day of resurrection. From Him is the origin and to Him is the return.

And they say: when is this promise, if ye be truthful? (25)

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا ٱلْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ٢٥

And they say ... 'They' means the disbelievers.

... when is this promise, if ye be truthful? It is the question put by the deniers of the return: when will this rising take place, if you believers are truthful and there is to be a final mustering and recompense?

Say: the knowledge is but with Allah, and I am but a clear warner. (26)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا ٱلْعِلْمُ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَآ أَنَا۠ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ٢٦

Say: ... The address is to the Messenger.

... the knowledge is but with Allah ... The knowledge of the day of resurrection is held only by Allah.

... and I am but a clear warner. The Messenger of Allah was but a warner. He was to warn them and frighten them of the arrival of the day of resurrection when those who persist in disbelief and disobedience would be chastised. As a warner, the Messenger warned them with perfect clarity.

So when they see it up close, awful will be the faces of those who disbelieved and it is said, 'This is what ye called for.' (27)

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيٓـَٔتْ وُجُوهُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟
وَقِيلَ هَٰذَا ٱلَّذِى كُنتُم بِهِۦ تَدَّعُونَ ٢٧

So when they see it up close, ... That is, when the disbelievers see the chastisement from nearby. 'They see it is given for *ra'awhū*, which literally means 'they saw it' – the past tense is used to portentify a definite future happening, as in the āyah, *'...the trumpet was blown...'* [lit: when *the trumpet is blown'* in the future] ([69:13], and elsewhere).

... awful will be the faces of those who disbelieved ... Dejection shall cover their faces, and upon them sadness and fear shall appear.

... and it is said, ... As the disbelievers see the chastisement, the angels, the Messengers and the believers will say to them:

... 'This is what ye called for. That is, 'This is the chastisement you called for.' The disbelievers had asked when the rising is to take place, urging its advancement, out of mockery.

Say: have ye considered: were Allah to destroy me and those with me, or mercy us, who would shelter the disbelievers from a painful chastisement? (28)	قُلۡ أَرَءَيۡتُمۡ إِنۡ أَهۡلَكَنِيَ ٱللَّهُ وَمَن مَّعِيَ أَوۡ رَحِمَنَا فَمَن يُجِيرُ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ مِنۡ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٖ ﴿٢٨﴾

Say: have ye considered ... The Messenger was to ask the disbelievers whether they had 'looked' or considered the issue that:

... were Allah to destroy ... That is, cause to die.

... me and those with me, ... That is, the Messenger and those with him, the believers.

... or mercy us, ... That is, mercifully allow them to live to see the disbelievers' chastisement.

... who would shelter the disbelievers from a painful chastisement? In neither case would the disbelievers be benefited by a prevention of their chastisement. The disbelievers used to wish for the death of the Messenger and the believers, so as to enjoy their disbelief and idol-worship. So the āyah explains that the death of the Messenger would be of no benefit in protecting them from the chastisement of Allah that they deserved on account of their disbelief and sins.

Say: He is the Compassionate. We believe in Him and upon Him we rely; soon ye shall know who is in a clear straying. (29)	قُلۡ هُوَ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنُ ءَامَنَّا بِهِۦ وَعَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡنَاۖ فَسَتَعۡلَمُونَ مَنۡ هُوَ فِي ضَلَٰلٖ مُّبِينٖ ﴿٢٩﴾

Say: ... The command is to the Messenger for it is in the singular.

... He is the Compassionate ... It is 'the Compassionate' *(al-Raḥmān)* whom Muslims call upon and supplicate.

... We believe in Him ... Confirming His existence, His attributes, His commands and His promises.

... and upon Him we rely; ... In Him we rely in our affairs and to Him we entrust our needs.

... soon ye shall know who is in a clear straying. On the day of resurrection the disbelievers will know whose path was clearly deviated, theirs or that of the believers.

Say: Have ye considered: if of a morning your water should have sunk into the earth, who then would bring ye visible water? (30)

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَآؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَن يَأْتِيكُم بِمَآءٍ مَّعِينٍۭ ﴿٣٠﴾

Say: ... The Messenger was to say to these disbelievers:

... Have ye considered: if of a morning your water should have sunk into the earth, ... That is: how do you disbelieve in Allah, when the water upon which you depend for your very lives is part of His affair and under His control? 'Have ye considered' means 'tell me': if one morning your water should have 'sunk into the earth' (given for *ghawran*) in such a way that you were unable to retrieve it,

... who then would bring ye visible water? 'Visible' is given for *ma^{c}īn,* meaning easily seen; easily digestible running water. Either way, is there any besides Allah who could recreate water? And since there is none but Allah who could do that, how can anyone turn away from Him and disbelieve in Him?

Surah al-Qalam (68)
'The Pen'

سورة القلم

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-qalam,* meaning 'the pen'. Like the other Makkan surahs, it deals with matters of faith and the principles of Divinity, Prophethood and the Return. Just as Surah al-Mulk concluded on the theme of the disbelievers and their belying the truth, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... We seek help by the name of Allah, for Allah is too majestic and sublime for the reader to seek help through Him, and the seeking of help is but through the name, just as it is said, 'The poor take refuge at Thy doorstep'.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on all things, and on everyone, for His mercy embraces all things.

Nūn. By the pen, and what they notate. (1)

نٓ ۚ وَٱلْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ﴿١﴾

Nūn is the name of the Arabic letter that has the sound of the English 'n'. Here, it signifies the species of letters – the Arabic alphabet – of which the miraculous Qur'an is composed, such that were the jinn and mankind to combine to produce the like of it, they would not be able to do so. Or the letter has a secret significance shared by Allah and the Messenger. In narrations it is said to be the name of a river in paradise that congeals to become ink, and by that ink and 'the Pen' *(al-qalam),* all that happens and will ever happen until the day of resurrection is written on 'the Protected Tablet' *(al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūdh).*

By the pen ... An oath by the pen, by which people write. The oath is sworn by it on account of what has been stated about all of Allah's creation being grand and magnificent, and that Allah binds covenants by various aspects of His creation, thus indicating the magnificence with which it is endowed. Or what is meant is the Pen that writes on the *Lawḥ al-Maḥfūdh.*

... and what they notate. The oath is also by what they write and notate, meaning what people write, or what the angels notate. 'Notate' is given for *saṭara*, so as to differentiate it from *kataba*, to write.

Thou are not, by the blessing of thy Lord, mad. (2)

مَآ أَنتَ بِنِعۡمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجۡنُونٖ ٢

Thou are not ... The address, in the singular, is to Allah's Messenger *may Allah bless him and his family.*

... by the blessing of thy Lord, mad. By the blessing and favour of Allah, he was not mad, as the disbelievers maintained. For they called him mad, on account of his being favoured with messengership.

And indeed for thee is certainly a reward without end. (3)

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجۡرًا غَيۡرَ مَمۡنُونٖ ٣

The Messenger had the good news of an unending wage as a reward for his undertaking the labours of his prophethood.

And truly thou are certainly on a magnificent disposition. (4)

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٖ ٤

That is, the Messenger endured the difficulties of delivering his message with perfect magnanimity. And the Messenger was tormented to the extent that he said, '*No Prophet has suffered annoyance the way I have suffered annoyance.*'

Soon thou shall see and they shall see (5)

فَسَتُبۡصِرُ وَيُبۡصِرُونَ ٥

That is, you, O Messenger, and they, the disbelievers who call you mad.

Which of ye is the demented. (6)

بِأَييِّكُمُ ٱلۡمَفۡتُونُ ٦

That is, whether madness is to be attributed to thee, O Messenger, or to them, for their turning away from the reality – for is it not madness to desert what is beneficial and take what is harmful? 'Demented' is given for *maftūn,* in contrast to the more common *majnūn*, for which we have put 'mad'.

Indeed thy Lord – He knows best who strays from His path and He knows best who is the guided. (7)

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ وَهُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِٱلۡمُهۡتَدِينَ ٧

Indeed thy Lord ... The address remains in the singular.

... He knows best who strays from His path ... He knows who strays from His path: whether it was the Messenger, as the disbelievers said, or whether it was the disbelievers, as indeed was the reality. 'Straying from His path' means to deviate from the path that He has laid down, glory be to Him, for man to reach fulfilment in the world and in the hereafter.

... and He knows best who is the guided. That is, those guided to the correct path, the path of Islam.

And since the clear path has been explained to you:

So obey not the beliers; (8)

فَلَا تُطِعِ ٱلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٨﴾

That is, follow not, O Messenger, those who belie your call to monotheism and your legislative path, or *shari*ʿ*ah*, but rather leave them to themselves.

They would love thee to compromise,
so they would compromise. (9)

وَدُّوا۟ لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ ﴿٩﴾

They would love thee to compromise ... The disbelievers would love it for you to be pliant, O Messenger, to be courteous with them and incline towards them.

... so they would compromise So, if he were to be pliant with them, they would have compromised with him, and maintained courteous relations with him, so as to lessen the impact of his call on themselves.

And obey not any base oath-monger,
(10)

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾

'Oath-monger' is given for *ḥallāf,* meaning someone who swears many false oaths, due to lack of considerations. 'Base' is given for *mahīn*, meaning low, ignoble and base. And these are amongst the qualities of the disbelievers for they find no path other than asserting their error, and so they clutch at oaths. Such people feel within themselves a sense of impotence and humiliation, despite their fits of excitement, their loud words, boasts and expansive swearing of oaths.

Defamer, walking about with slander,
(11)

هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍۭ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾

'Defamer' is given for *hammāz*, meaning to be a persistent slanderer of people. 'Slander' is given for *namīm*, meaning the vicious slander that is intended to

give rise to dissension. The āyah is about those who go amongst the people sowing corruption and disharmony by the telling of slanderous lies, so as to incite violence and disorder.

Hinderer of the good, a violator, a persistent sinner, (12)

مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلۡخَيۡرِ مُعۡتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾

Hinderer is given for *mannā*[c], meaning one who persistently hinders. Whenever such a person sees the people intending to do some good, he stops them out of the baseness of his own spirit. He is a transgressor who violates the truth, and who persistently sins and is disobedient.

Coarse, after all that, ignoble. (13)

عُتُلِّۢ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾

That is, besides the qualities already given he is rough-tempered and course *(ᶜutull).* 'Ignoble' is given for *zanīm*, meaning an individual of illegitimate birth who is associated with a tribe to whom he does not belong by birth. It is said that the āyah was sent down with reference to al-Walīd ibn al-Mughayrah. These qualities generally combine among the evils of those who hinder the truth and practice every evil. And we have seen them in our own time. It seems that when the spirit deviates from the path of guidance, all these qualities combine within it.

That he is a holder of wealth and sons, (14)

أَن كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

That is, because he has been granted wealth and sons he belies the divine signs and portents – returning evil for goodness – by referring to those āyāt as "Fables of the ancients".

When Our portents are recited to him he says, 'Fables of the ancients!' (15)

إِذَا تُتۡلَىٰ عَلَيۡهِ ءَايَٰتُنَا قَالَ أَسَٰطِيرُ ٱلۡأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

When the portents or āyāt of the Qur'an are recited to him he calls them the stories of ancient peoples woven together bearing no serious principle. 'Fables' is given for *asāṭīr*, meaning empty, imaginary tales that have no reality. And it is amongst the wonders how closely this word of the detractors of the age of the Messenger resembles what the detractors of the present age say, that Islam is archaic and reactionary.

We shall brand him on the muzzle. (16)

سَنَسِمُهُۥ عَلَى ٱلۡخُرۡطُومِ ١٦

That is, a portent or sign shall be applied to him on the day of resurrection by which it shall be known that he is guilty. The sign shall be applied to his muzzle, given for *khurṭūm*, the trunk of an elephant, which word is used for belittlement. Indeed, their being branded on the trunk is on account of how the nose is the point of one's dignity and honour.

Indeed We tried them just as We tried the companions of the garden, when they swore they would pluck it in the morning, (17)

إِنَّا بَلَوۡنَٰهُمۡ كَمَا بَلَوۡنَآ أَصۡحَٰبَ ٱلۡجَنَّةِ إِذۡ أَقۡسَمُواْ لَيَصۡرِمُنَّهَا مُصۡبِحِينَ ١٧

Indeed We tried them ... That is, the people of Makkah.

... just as We examined the companions of the garden. It was an orchard near Ṣanā, in the Yemen. From the Imam al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him*, we have it that the people of Makkah were tried with hunger like the companions of the garden; and the garden was in this world, located in the Yemen and called Riḍwān, at about nine miles from Ṣanā.

The story of the companions of the garden, as narrated by al-Shaykh al-Qummi from Ibn ᶜAbbās, is that there was an old man who possessed a garden, and he was such that not a thing passed from the garden into his house before all rights from it and dues had been given. When the old man died, he was inherited by his sons, of whom there were five.

The harvest that year, the first harvest after the death of their father, was a bumper harvest the like of which had never occurred before. So they were self-congratulatory on account of their orchard. After the afternoon prayer they were gazing on their harvest and the bumper crop that was far better than anything produced during the life of their father, and they exalted and transgressed. One of them said to the others, ‘Our father was an old man and his reason and mind was gone, so come on, let us swear among ourselves that this year we will give nothing to any of the poor muslims – that is, Muslims of their era – so that we become rich and our wealth multiply. Then we will do so in future years (i.e. give to the poor).

Four of the brothers agreed to this, the fifth was silent – it was he about whom Allah says, *...The middle one of them said, 'Did I not say to ye, should ye not glorify?'*

He said to them, 'Fear Allah and remain on the path of your father: surrender and prosper.' But they began to strike him and beat him, until he realised that they would kill him, and so he agreed to go along with their intention, reluctantly and with abhorrence. So they returned home and swore by Allah that they would return in the morning and pick the fruit, though they did not say if Allah wills. And so Allah afflicted them for their sin, and came between them and that provision upon which they had gazed. And they are spoken of in the Book, from the words 'Surely We try them ...' until the end of the account that follows.

Perhaps the similarity between the disbelievers of Makkah and these brothers was that they were ungrateful for the blessings of Allah, glory be to Him, and so He tried them with drought and scarcity, just as when the brothers intended to deny the poor in opposition to His command, glory be to Him, He tried them with the fire that burned their garden.

… when they swore they would pluck it in the morning,

They swore by Allah that they would pick its harvest early in the morning before daybreak, so as to keep the affair hidden from the poor and the destitute.

And they made not the exception. (18) وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, they swore their oath without saying the words 'If Allah is willing' *(InShā'Allāh)*. This term is called the exception *(al-istithnā)* for it is said by a speaker who means I will do such and such except if Allah denies me. That is the meaning of *InShā'Allāh*. And by not making this exception they offended with two evils. Firstly by their intention to bar the poor; and secondly by their failing to make the exception in relation to what they intended in the future.

So a visitation from thy Lord visited it, while they were sleeping, (19) فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَآئِمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

An instance of chastisement visited the orchard, from the direction of your Lord, O Messenger, while they were sleeping in their beds. It is said that Allah sent a fire to the orchard, and it burned down.

So that in the morning it was as if plucked. (20) فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَٱلصَّرِيمِ ﴿٢٠﴾

In the morning it was as if the produce of the garden had been picked. 'Plucked' is given for *ṣarīm*, which means 'cut off', though the āyah may also mean, "… it was like the darkness of night", on account of both night and day being termed *ṣarīm*, as each is cut off by the other.

Then they called each other in the morning, (21)

فَتَنَادَوْاْ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

When morning arrived some of the brothers called to the others.

To 'Be early to your tilth if ye would pluck!' (22)

أَنِ ٱغْدُواْ عَلَىٰ حَرْثِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَـٰرِمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

They called each other to hurry and get to the orchard early, if they wanted to gather the harvest.

So they departed, conspiring: (23)

فَٱنطَلَقُواْ وَهُمْ يَتَخَـٰفَتُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

They left for the orchard, all the while whispering furtively between themselves. 'Conspiring' is given for *yatakhāfatūn*, from *khafata*, 'to conceal', as in *khafata nafsah*, 'he concealed himself'.

'That no destitute person shall enter the garden upon ye this day.' (24)

أَن لَّا يَدْخُلَنَّهَا ٱلْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُم مِّسْكِينٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

They were whispering so as not to alert any of the poor and bring them to the garden that day when they were harvesting its produce.

In this manner they made their way until they reached their garden.

So they went early empowered for denial. (25)

وَغَدَوْاْ عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَـٰدِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

That is, they were determined to deny the harvest to the poor. But their morning was such that they only had the power to be denied the harvest, instead of having the power to gather it. The style is one of mockery, just as it is said that a man's hand is full of air, instead of being full of wealth. It means that their morning was such that they were denied the harvest, for they had not the power to gather it, only to be denied it.

So when they saw it, they said, 'Indeed we are truly astray!' (26)

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا لَضَآلُّونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

They saw the orchard in its ruined condition. Some of the brothers said to others, 'We have lost our way and gone astray, this is not our garden.'

After they had considered and realised that it was indeed their orchard, they corrected their earlier reaction and said,

'Nay, we are deprived!' (27)

بَلۡ نَحۡنُ مَحۡرُومُونَ ٢٧

That is, deprived of the harvest and the produce of the orchard, for it had burned down.

The middle one of them said, 'Did I not say to ye: should ye not glorify?' (28)

قَالَ أَوۡسَطُهُمۡ أَلَمۡ أَقُل لَّكُمۡ لَوۡلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ ٢٨

The middle one is given for *awṣat*, middling, by which is meant the wisest, for the wisest is called the middle or middling one, since the wise refrains from the two extremes. He pointed out that he had warned them when they were talking of denying the poor, and had said to them, 'Should ye not glorify Allah, and magnify His purity.' For he had said to them when they were agreeing to deny the poor, 'O brothers, glorify Allah and magnify His transcendence of all that is ugly, for He is far above granting to the rich while denying the poor!' So he said to them 'Yet ye acted rashly and turned your backs on good advice. So this is the reward of your evil intention.'

Then, when all had come to an end,

They said, 'Glory be to our Lord! Indeed, truly we were wrongful.' (29)

قَالُواْ سُبۡحَٰنَ رَبِّنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَٰلِمِينَ ٢٩

They did not hold Allah to blame for destroying their orchard; rather, they realised that they themselves were unjust in intending to deny the poor their rights.

So some of them turned on others, blaming each other; (30)

فَأَقۡبَلَ بَعۡضُهُمۡ عَلَىٰ بَعۡضٖ يَتَلَٰوَمُونَ ٣٠

Each was blaming the other for what they had done between them: the evil intention.

They said, 'O, woe is ours! Indeed we were transgressors.' (31)

قَالُواْ يَٰوَيۡلَنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا طَٰغِينَ ٣١

‘Woe’ is put for *wayl;* it means an awful, atrocious condition, and stands for ‘O people, bring us an awful condition’ or ‘O awful condition, come, for now is your time.’ The word ‘transgressors’ is put for *ṭāghīn*, plural of *ṭāghī*, meaning one who violates the limits in injustice.

'Might it be that our Lord will exchange us better than it, indeed of our Lord we are requesters.' (32)

عَسَىٰ رَبُّنَآ أَن يُبۡدِلَنَا خَيۡرٗا مِّنۡهَآ إِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رَٰغِبُونَ ٣٢

That is, they hoped that Allah, glory be to Him, would give them better than the garden they had lost. They placed their desires and their hopes in Him and sought His forgiveness, and asked Him to restore to them a replacement for the orchard.

Just so is the chastisement, and the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, had they known. (33)

كَذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡعَذَابُۖ وَلَعَذَابُ ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ أَكۡبَرُۚ لَوۡ كَانُواْ يَعۡلَمُونَ ٣٣

Just so is the chastisement ... That is, the chastisement of the sinners in the world is just like the chastisement of the companions of the orchard.

... and the chastisement of the hereafter is greater, ... The chastisement in the afterlife is greater than the chastisements of this world.

... had they known. If they knew anything about the proportions of the chastisement of the hereafter they would know that it is greater than the chastisement of this world.

In contrast to these are the guardful:

Indeed for the guardful with their Lord are gardens of blessings. (34)

إِنَّ لِلۡمُتَّقِينَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمۡ جَنَّٰتِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ٣٤

Indeed for the guardful ... It means those who are guardful against disbelief and sin, in that they fear the punishment of Allah, glory be to Him.

... with their Lord are gardens of blessings ... The reward of the guardful is in the hereafter. It is termed as being ‘with their Lord’ on account of how they are close to His contentment and satisfaction, rather than close to Him physically. The gardens of blessings are called this because it is within them that the blessings are bestowed.

So, shall We put the muslims as the offenders? (35)

أَفَنَجْعَلُ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ كَٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Muslims are those who submit to Allah, glory be to Him, [this applies to anyone who submits to the will of the Almighty by accepting and following the correct teachings of the messenger of Allah of their respective times. Today the *muslims* are those who follow the teachings of the Almighty's final messenger, the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family.*] *Muslims* shall not be treated the same as those who sin and offend before Him. The effect of the question form is to assert this denial. It means: 'How can we treat the muslim and the offender the same in the hereafter?' The disbelievers used to say that if there was to be a resurrection they would be raised in a condition better than the condition of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

What is with ye? How do ye judge! (36)

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

The āyah is addressed to the disbelievers. What is with you? O disbelievers; how do you judge that the offenders are like the muslims before Allah, glory be to Him? Is such a judgement the fruit of reason?

Or have ye a scripture in which ye study? (37)

أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَٰبٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Or is the judgement not your own, but rather you have a revealed book sent down upon previous Prophets, in which you have studied and read that the offender and the muslim are equal?

Clearly ye have in it what ye choose! (38)

إِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

… and that in such a book you can choose for yourselves whatever reward in the hereafter you like? The style is one of mockery.

Or have ye oaths against Us extending unto the day of resurrection? Indeed yours is whatever ye judge! (39)

أَمْ لَكُمْ أَيْمَٰنٌ عَلَيْنَا بَٰلِغَةٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ ۙ إِنَّ لَكُمْ لَمَا تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

That is, have you a pact with Allah, a sworn promise from Him that will last throughout the ages and cover you on the day of resurrection? Such a set of

oaths promising you whatever you decide, from your equality with the believers to your entering the paradise.

Ask them: which of them is of that a guarantor? (40)

سَلۡهُمۡ أَيُّهُم بِذَٰلِكَ زَعِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, ask them, O Messenger: who amongst them is a guarantor of those things they said, e.g. to be treated like the *muslims*? Who will guarantee to them that they shall have what the Muslims shall have? As it is clear that they have no book, no pact and no guarantor, they should realise that their words are mere vanities empty of any authority and proof.

Or have they partner-gods? So let them present their partner-gods, if they are truthful! (41)

أَمۡ لَهُمۡ شُرَكَآءُ فَلۡيَأۡتُواْ بِشُرَكَآئِهِمۡ إِن كَانُواْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

'Partner-gods' is given for *shurakā'* meaning partners or associates, and here what is meant is partners with Allah in Divinity. The question is whether the disbelievers have other gods to deliver to them what Allah will deliver to the believers. So let them bring their other gods on the day of resurrection and let them take from them (their gods) – the words are again words of mockery and derision – if they are truthful in saying that they shall have the like of what the believers shall have.

Yes, let them bring their partner-gods at the time when:

The day the leg is bared, and they are called to prostrate but shall be unable; (42)

يَوۡمَ يُكۡشَفُ عَن سَاقٖ وَيُدۡعَوۡنَ إِلَى ٱلسُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسۡتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

The day the leg is bared, ... When fear is paramount it is said that a person bares his legs, by raising his clothes and making it easier for himself to flee, so that the loose clothing does not get caught up in his legs. The expression indicates terror.

... and they are called to prostrate but shall be unable; That day those disbelievers will be summoned to prostrate themselves, for they shall endure the disgrace of being called to prostrate, but shall be unable to do so on account of their vertebrae being locked and set solid so that they are unable to bend and perform the prostration; as is clear in the narrations.

Humble is their sight, lowliness overcomes them; and they had certainly been called to prostration while they were well. (43)	خَٰشِعَةً أَبۡصَٰرُهُمۡ تَرۡهَقُهُمۡ ذِلَّةٞۖ وَقَدۡ كَانُواْ يُدۡعَوۡنَ إِلَى ٱلسُّجُودِ وَهُمۡ سَٰلِمُونَ ٤٣

Humble is their sight ... Their gaze that day shall not rise above the ground, out of disgrace, humiliation and dread.

... lowliness overcomes them ... They shall be covered in abasement and humiliation, for its signs will be evident in their movements, their being still and on their cheeks.

... and they had certainly been called to prostration while they were well. Those disbelievers had been called while they were in the world to prostrate and be humble towards Allah while they were healthy, but they did not prostrate. And so they are rewarded with the humiliation, and with their being unable to prostrate on the day of resurrection.

So leave Me and whosoever belies this pronouncement: soon We shall gradually lead them on from whence they know not. (44)	فَذَرۡنِي وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلۡحَدِيثِۖ سَنَسۡتَدۡرِجُهُم مِّنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَعۡلَمُونَ ٤٤

So leave me with whosoever belies this pronouncement ... 'pronouncement' is given for *ḥadīth,* which in this context means the Holy Qur'an. The command is in the singular, addressed to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.* The meaning is that he was to leave to Allah, glory be to Him, whoever disputed the truth of what he was telling them about Monotheism, Messengership and the Return. That is, he was to leave them to Allah, glory be to Him, to deal with. It is a warning, meaning: We shall requite them.

... soon We shall gradually lead them on ... 'Gradually lead them on' is given for *nastadrijuhum*, from *istidrāj* to seek a thing gradually, step by step, until it reaches the desired end. It means that Allah shall set them up for the punishment by giving them life and wealth so that they advance in disbelief and disobedience, and make themselves deserving of the severest chastisement.

... from whence they know not. They shall not know that they are being led to punishment and chastisement; they consider they are blessed with blessings, health, wealth and position.

And I respite them; indeed My plot is solid. (45)

وَأُمۡلِي لَهُمۡۚ إِنَّ كَيۡدِي مَتِينٌ ٤٥

Allah, glory be to Him, respites them and bears with them, for His plan is solid. That is, that which He has prepared for the chastisement of the evil is firm, unyielding; it will never break apart and no fault or imperfection shall ever affect it.

Then, conjunctive to the āyah, 'Or have you a book ...' comes His word:

Or do thou ask them a reward, and they are weighed down by the fine? (46)

أَمۡ تَسۡـَٔلُهُمۡ أَجۡرٗا فَهُم مِّن مَّغۡرَمٖ مُّثۡقَلُونَ ٤٦

That is, have you, O Messenger, asked these disbelievers for a wage in return for carrying out the Messengership and calling them to Islam. So that they, under the burden of the price or 'fine' *(maghram),* its necessity and the necessity of the wealth sought from them, are brought low by it? And so they wish to flee from it?

To sum up: their lack of faith – is it on account of their believing that there is no benefit in faith, as they have read in scripture and they are sure that they shall be in gardens like the Muslims? Or is it that they know there is a benefit to faith and that the gardens depend upon it, but that faith has a fine, and they are fleeing from this fine?

Or is the unseen with them, so that they write? (47)

أَمۡ عِندَهُمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبُ فَهُمۡ يَكۡتُبُونَ ٤٧

Has the revelation *(waḥy)* descended upon them, to the effect that their disbelief and disobedience is correct? And they have written it down and learned it? That is, 'Is it that they do not yield to Islam on account of their having revelation and a book just as thou have revelation and a book?'

And since, O Messenger of Allah, you see the disbelievers armed with only contingencies and accidentals, without any proofs:

So be restrained for the affair of thy Lord, and be not like the companion of the whale, when he called while he was in restraint. (48)

فَٱصۡبِرۡ لِحُكۡمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُن كَصَاحِبِ ٱلۡحُوتِ
إِذۡ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكۡظُومٞ ٤٨

So be restrained for the affair of thy Lord, ... The Messenger was to endure with patience and be steadfast in delivering the message, and to bear the difficulties along the way.

... and be not like the companion of the whale, ... The Messenger Jonah (Yūnus), *peace be upon him,* who sought chastisement for his people and deserted them when he saw no benefit in continuing to calling them. This was 'forsaking the best' *(tark al-awlā)* in consideration of the station of prophethood.

... when he called ... He called Allah, glory be to Him, to send chastisement on his tribe.

... while he was contained. 'Contained' is given for *makdhūm,* for he had 'contained' *(kadhama)* his anger at his tribe, had 'imprisoned it', and was therefore *makdhūm al-ghaidh*, 'one whose anger is contained'.

لَّوْلَآ أَن تَدَٰرَكَهُۥ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ لَنُبِذَ بِٱلْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

Had a blessing from his Lord not caught up with him, he would have been cast to the wilderness in blame. (49)

Had a blessing from his Lord not caught up with him, ... The blessing of his repentance and his seeking forgiveness – for repentance is a blessing from Allah, glory be to Him, upon the servant.

... he would have been cast to the wilderness ... He would have been cast from the belly of the whale into a 'wilderness' *(ᶜarā'),* meaning a barren land empty of life and shelter, where he would have died of the heat and the cold and hunger.

... in blame. And he was blameworthy – in making the supplication against his people he failed "to perform the best possible", and though not a sin as such, yet it is incongruous with the station of the Prophets, and so he needed to repent from that and be cleansed of it.

And when the blessing of his Lord reached him:

فَٱجْتَبَٰهُ رَبُّهُۥ فَجَعَلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

So his Lord chose him and put him among the virtuous. (50)

So, ... That is, after the blessing of Allah had reached him and he had repented and sought forgiveness,

... his Lord chose him ... Allah accepted his repentance and chose him and raised him and restored him to his former station.

... and put him among the virtuous. He placed him among the virtuous *(al-sāliḥīn)*, those with the virtues necessary to implement the divine mission.

So be patient, O Messenger of Allah, for thy Lord's affair, and be not like Yunus, and realise that the disbelievers wish an end to your call:

And verily the disbelievers will almost strike thee down with their glances, when they hear the reminder, and they say, 'Surely he is mad.' (51)

وَإِن يَكَادُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَـٰرِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُواْ ٱلذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُۥ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٥١﴾

And indeed it seems the disbelievers almost make thee stumble with their looks ... That is, the disbelievers almost make you fall on the ground so that you cannot stand up to deliver the message. It is a metaphor, since to fail to stand for the delivery of the message is like a person fallen over rather than standing on two legs. And this was done with their eyes, for they would give dark malicious looks to the Messenger – the look of enmity that causes a person to give up what he intended, for when a person notices anger on his listener's face he gives up what he wanted to say.

... As soon as they hear the reminder ... That is, the Qur'an.

... they say, 'Indeed he is mad.' They would say that the Messenger is mad, his reason is damaged and gone, and his words are nonsense and meaningless.

While it is nought but a reminder for the worlds! (52)

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَـٰلَمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

This Qur'an is nought else than a reminder to the worlds, reminding them of what was placed innate within them: monotheism, the return, and suchlike.

Surah al-Ḥāqqah (69) 'The Definite'

سورة الحاقة

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *al-ḥāqqah*, a name for the resurrection from *ḥaqqa*, meaning to be fixed, real, certain. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith, and as the final part of Surah al-Qalam concluded on the theme of the resurrection and the threat to the disbelievers, so this surah opens on the same theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, … We begin with the name of the God to whom belongs every particle of existence. His name is noble, the best thing by which to commence all affairs, for He blesses whatever is begun in His name, as is narrated: *'Any matter significance that is not begun by the name Allah – will be fruitless.'*

… the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on whoever asks Him and whoever does not ask Him, although those who ask Him are subject to His special grace and favour – in addition to His compassion that embraces all things.

The Definite: (1)

ٱلۡحَآقَّةُ ١

The Definite is given for *al-ḥāqqah*, one of the names of the resurrection. The Mustering is given this name on account of it being an hour that will certainly and definitely take place. The word is from *ḥaqqa*, meaning to be fixed, true and definite.

What is the Definite? (2)

مَا ٱلۡحَآقَّةُ ٢

The question affords a sense of grand emphasis, meaning 'what is it?' and also 'what is more severe and terrifying than it?'

And what will make thee comprehend what the Definite is? (3)

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡحَآقَّةُ ٣

The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger, or to listener as an individual. It means: 'what is this thing, don't think that you can know its severities without having seen it.' This does not imply a denial of the Messenger's

knowledge – assuming the address is to him – rather, it indicates the severities of the event.

The flow of the surah now turns to explain the condition of some former peoples who gave the lie to the resurrection, and subsequently Allah, glory be to Him, destroyed them:

Thamud and ᶜAd belied the Shudderer; (4)

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌۢ بِٱلْقَارِعَةِ ﴿٤﴾

The Thamūd were the people of the Messenger Ṣāliḥ, *peace be upon him*. The ᶜĀd were the people of Hūd, *peace be upon him*. Both tribes called the resurrection a lie. The resurrection is called ‘The Shudderer’ on account of how it will make things shudder, and will demolish them, and will make the hearts shudder with dread.

So as for Thamud, they were destroyed by the transgressor; (5)

فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَأُهْلِكُوا۟ بِٱلطَّاغِيَةِ ﴿٥﴾

That is, they were recompensed for their belying by a transgressor *(ṭāghiya)* and piercing screech that transgressed into them and tore out their hearts, and destroyed them.

And as for ᶜAd, they were destroyed by a wind, icy, furious. (6)

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا۟ بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ﴿٦﴾

They were recompensed for their belying with destruction, wrought by an icy and exceedingly gusty wind. It was ‘insolent’ *(ᶜutuw)* in that it exceeded its usual limit.

He subordinated it against them for seven nights and eight days uninterruptedly, so that thou would have seen the people therein strewn about as if they were stumps of hollow palm-trees. (7)

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَـٰنِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى ٱلْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَىٰ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ﴿٧﴾

He subordinated it against them for seven nights and eight days ... Allah subordinated the wind and sent it in their direction.; its cold and screeching destroyed them.

... uninterruptedly ... It is given for *ḥusūman*; which may also mean *fatally,* in that the wind cut off their progeny, when none of them remained alive.

... so that thou would have seen the tribe therein strewn about as if they were stumps of hollow palm-trees. Throughout that time, during those days and nights, an observer would have seen the ʿĀd lying dead all around, as if they were the stumps of rotten palm-trees, for with their tall bodies and the duration of their remaining on the ground, that is what they resembled.

So do thou see for them any remaining? (8)

فَهَلْ تَرَىٰ لَهُم مِّنۢ بَاقِيَةٍ ۝٨

Is there anyone left from these tribes to continue their line? The question form has an emotive purpose. The meaning is that none of them remained. And such is the end of every people who belie the truth; the day of judgement: they are destroyed without a single survivor.

And Pharaoh, those before him, and the overturned were progressing in error, (9)

وَجَآءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَن قَبْلَهُۥ وَٱلْمُؤْتَفِكَٰتُ بِٱلْخَاطِئَةِ ۝٩

Pharaoh and his people disobeyed Moses, *peace be upon him*. They, and the previous peoples – of Noah, and others like them – and the overturned, meaning the overturned city, the city of (the prophet) Lot, meaning the people of that city, all followed paths of error.

Then they disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord; and so He took them with an excessive taking. (10)

فَعَصَوْا۟ رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ۝١٠

Then they disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord ... What is meant by 'the Messenger' is the genus of Messenger, as previously discussed.

... and so He took them with an excessive seizing. Allah, glory be to Him, seized them in the chastisement of His grip steadily becoming more severe.

In the past, Allah has taken those who belied, while saving those who acknowledged the truth, just as He saved the believers in Noah, who were the fathers of all human beings:

We indeed, when the water transgressed, carried ye in the cruising ark, (11)

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا ٱلْمَآءُ حَمَلْنَٰكُمْ فِى ٱلْجَارِيَةِ ۝١١

The waters 'transgressed' – that is, went so far beyond their normal levels that the whole earth was flooded. Allah carried us in the cruising ark in the sense that we are all among the descendents of those whom He carried to safety in that way. 'The cruising ark' is given for *al-jāriyah*, which is from *jarā,* 'to flow', and literally means 'one that flows'; here it means the ship that ran on the floodwaters.

So that We put it to be a reminder for ye, and for the retaining ear to retain it. (12)

لِنَجۡعَلَهَا لَكُمۡ تَذۡكِرَةٗ وَتَعِيَهَآ أُذُنٞ وَٰعِيَةٞ ١٢

That is, He placed this event that He did for mankind as a reminder to remember the favours of Allah, glory be to Him. That, and for the ear ready to listen to warningful lessons to take heed, to learn, understand and act.

Having seen the respective fates in the world of those who belie and those who confirm, now comes a consideration of their fates in the hereafter:

So when the trumpet is blown with a single blowing, (13)

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي ٱلصُّورِ نَفۡخَةٞ وَٰحِدَةٞ ١٣

That is, when the angel Isrāfil blows the trumpet so as to raise the dead, which is his second blast. It is a single blast, as there is no need for it to be repeated, because at this one blast all of mankind will come to life. [Prior to this, Isrāfil heralds the end of time and life in this world by blowing his first blast, when every living being dies.]

And the earth and the mountains are carried, and the two are demolished at a single demolishing, (14)

وَحُمِلَتِ ٱلۡأَرۡضُ وَٱلۡجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةٗ وَٰحِدَةٗ ١٤

And the earth and the mountains are carried, ... The meaning of the earth being carried is that its depressions are raised so that everywhere is level and flat. The 'carrying' of the mountains is their being pulverised to dust so that the face of the earth is completely level, with neither upland nor depression, so that it is a plain ready for the resurrection.

... and the two are demolished at a single demolishing, ... The crushing shall encompass the earth and the mountains all at once, and will not be a gradual affair.

So that day, the Occurrence will occur, (15)	فَيَوْمَئِذٖ وَقَعَتِ ٱلْوَاقِعَةُ ۝١٥

The Occurrence is given for *al-waqi^c ah*, one of the names of the resurrection. It is given this name to portend that it most certainly shall occur.

And the sky rends asunder so that it that day is frail; (16)	وَٱنشَقَّتِ ٱلسَّمَآءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٖ وَاهِيَةٞ ۝١٦

The sky shall be demolished that day and will seem to be in ruins, and man will see it split; in a condition much like that of a ruined wall and suchlike. It shall be weak and frail, for the order of which it is presently a part shall be no more, and the orbits will overlap each other.

And the angels will be at its edges, and eight that day will carry above them the Trellis of thy Lord. (17)	وَٱلْمَلَكُ عَلَىٰٓ أَرْجَآئِهَاۚ وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٖ ثَمَٰنِيَةٞ ۝١٧

And the angels will be at its edges, ... The angels who descend for the reckoning and the other duties will be first seen at the sky's new edges.

... and eight that day will carry above them the Trellis of thy Lord ... 'Trellis' is the literal meaning of *^c arsh*. It is the place from which are issued the commands of Allah, glory be to Him. It is termed the *^c arsh* of Allah in the same way as the Ka^c bah is called the house of Allah, and for the same purpose of according it honour. On that day the *^c arsh* will be carried aloft by eight angels.

All of this is for the purpose of increasing terror, and is in harmony with the human mind that sees greatness and feels fear at such things as these.

That day ye are paraded, none in hiding among ye shall be hidden. (18)	يَوْمَئِذٖ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَىٰ مِنكُمْ خَافِيَةٞ ۝١٨

There is no escape from that terrible, dreadful day. Not a soul will be able to hide and be hidden, for there will be nowhere to hide. All mankind will be manifest and able to see one another, along with their actions – if good then good, and if evil then evil. *There the creation will be divided into two groups:*

So as for him who is given his book on his right, he shall say 'Here, read my book; (19)	فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِيَمِينِهِۦ فَيَقُولُ هَآؤُمُ ٱقْرَءُواْ كِتَٰبِيَهْ ۝١٩

His book is the statement of his deeds in which the angels have recorded everything he has done in the world. He will be given it 'on his right'; that is, in his right hand, and this is a sign of his success and salvation. In joy and relief he will address the people of the day of resurrection, and say, 'Here [given for *hā'um*, plural form of *hā*, meaning come and take], read my book, and see the good deeds that are within it.'

'Indeed I anticipated that I would meet my reckoning.' (20)

إِنِّي ظَنَنتُ أَنِّي مُلَٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٠﴾

While in the world he thought he would meet his reckoning in the hereafter, and so he acted righteously until he reached the lofty level of happiness and salvation. 'Anticipated' is given for *dhanantu*; and it seems this word is used to show that the supposition of something being good is enough reason to make a person do that deed, in the same way countering a supposed danger or harm is clearly required by reason.

So he is in a contented life, (21)

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾

He who is given his book in his right hand shall live 'a contented life' *(ᶜīshatin rāḍīyah).* Saying the life is contented is figurative, for it is the person living that life who is contented.

In a lofty garden, (22)

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

The gardens of paradise are lofty in both status and situation.

Its clusters low; (23)

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

The fruits of the gardens are easily accessible; picking them entails no difficulty whatsoever. Simply a person will desire the fruit and a cluster will come near in order to be picked.

And they shall be introduced to the garden in terms of respect and dignity, with the words:

'Eat and drink, sweetly, for what ye sent on in the days gone by.' (24)

كُلُوا۟ وَٱشْرَبُوا۟ هَنِيٓـًٔا بِمَآ أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي ٱلْأَيَّامِ ٱلْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾

'Eat and drink, sweetly ... That is, eat of the fruits of the gardens, and drink of its springs and streams, pleasantly and happily without illness or any necessity to eat and drink.

... for what ye sent on in the days gone by.' And this is on account of the righteous actions sent on beforehand, in those bygone days you spent in the world.

Having seen the condition of the people of paradise, now we must see the condition of the people of the fire:

While as for him who is given his book on his left, he will say, ‘O, would that I had not been given my book!’ (25)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِشِمَالِهِۦ فَيَقُولُ يَٰلَيْتَنِى
لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَٰبِيَهْ ٢٥

Those who are for the fire are given the record of their deeds, as recorded by the angels, in their left hands. Each will wish that he had not been given his book, so that he would not have to see the account of his evils to be recompensed.

‘And not comprehended my reckoning!’ (26)

وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ٢٦

They will wish that they did not know what their accounts contain.

‘O, would that it had been the consummation!’ (27)

يَٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ ٱلْقَاضِيَةَ ٢٧

‘O, that it ... That is, the death that he died in the world.

... had been the consummation. That is, the end. Such a person will wish that his death in the world had been the end of his life, forever, so that he would not have been raised to see the evil of his deeds and be subjected to disgrace and chastisement

‘My wealth has not enriched me!’ (28)

مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّى مَالِيَهْ ۜ ٢٨

That is, his wealth cannot defend him against the chastisement of Allah, glory be to Him, even in the slightest.

‘My authority has perished from me!’ (29)

هَلَكَ عَنِّى سُلْطَٰنِيَهْ ٢٩

He will say, 'My authority, my rank and power are no more. Now I have neither property to defend me nor authority to benefit me, though I dedicated my life and all my efforts to them!'

The flow then turns to the words from the Supreme Authority to the angels in charge of such offenders:

'Take him and shackle him, (30) خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ﴿٣٠﴾

'Take him ... That is: 'Take him and hold him...' so that he has no opportunity to escape.

... and shackle him, It means that such a person will be bound in irons, so that parts of him are bound and fettered to other parts, and he is unable to escape.

'Thereupon the raging fire: cast him in! (31) ثُمَّ ٱلْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ ﴿٣١﴾

After being bound, he is to be placed within 'the raging fire' *(al-jaḥīm).*

'Thereupon in a chain, its length seventy cubits, enchain him!' (32) ثُمَّ فِى سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَٱسْلُكُوهُ ﴿٣٢﴾

'Thereupon in a chain, its length seventy cubits, ... cubits, or forearms, is the distance between fingertip and elbow...

... enchain him!' The extreme length of the chain with which he will be bound indicates the severity of the punishment and of the distress it causes. It is said that the chain will enter his throat and come out of his behind.

The flow then turns to explain the cause of this type of punishment:

Indeed he was not believing in Allah, the Magnificent, (33) إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ ﴿٣٣﴾

The offender did not believe in Allah while he was in the world, despite His magnificence, but rather stubbornly refused to believe,

And he urged not the feeding of the destitute; (34) وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ ﴿٣٤﴾

That is, he did not urge and incite people to feed the poor – a failure to perform the duty of commanding to the honourable. Or perhaps what is meant is that he prevented himself, in that one who prevents fails to urge, which would be a case of mentioning the effect while intending the cause. It is essential to urge that the poor be fed, for they are face to face with perdition.

So this day here he has no boon companion, (35)

فَلَيۡسَ لَهُ ٱلۡيَوۡمَ هَٰهُنَا حَمِيمٞ ﴿٣٥﴾

That disbeliever on the day of resurrection will have no friend at the gathering to benefit him.

And no food except of pus; (36)

وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنۡ غِسۡلِينٖ ﴿٣٦﴾

'Pus' is given for *ghislīn*, meaning the pus of sores (of the folk of hell); or it may mean the water that remains after it is used for washing the pus.

None eat it but the errorful. (37)

لَّا يَأۡكُلُهُۥٓ إِلَّا ٱلۡخَٰطِـُٔونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

None eat that *ghislīn* except those who made the mistake while in the world of following disbelief and disobedience.

After these comparisons between the conditions in the hereafter of the believers and the disbelievers, the flow turns to prove the Messengership and deny some fanciful claims made about the Messenger:

So I swear not by what ye observe, (38)

فَلَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِمَا تُبۡصِرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

The address is to mankind, in the plural.

And what ye do not observe, (39)

وَمَا لَا تُبۡصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

That is, by what is manifest and what is hidden. The use of 'not' *(lā)* is to convey a very subtle point. It conveys that the oath is extremely grave. When a person wishes to make an oath, and to convey that the oath is of outstanding importance, he may say, 'I swear not by your life that such and such...'. Then he has not sworn an oath, while suggesting an oath. Accordingly, the *lā* is for negation, and is not superfluous.

He then clarifies the object of the oath, in His word:

Indeed it is truly the word of an honoured messenger, (40)

إِنَّهُۥ لَقَوۡلُ رَسُولٖ كَرِيمٖ ۝٤٠

That is, this Qur'an is the word entrusted to a Messenger honoured alongside Allah, glory be to Him. And he is from Him, for the Messenger spoke not but from Him, glory be to Him.

And it is not a poet's word; little ye believe! (41)

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوۡلِ شَاعِرٖۚ قَلِيلٗا مَّا تُؤۡمِنُونَ ۝٤١

And it is not a poet's word ... The Qur'an is not the word of a poet; for the disbelievers would say that Muhammad was a poet and the Qur'an was poetry.

... little ye believe! It means that their faith was little, or that few of them believed the prophet. The sense affords a censure, meaning: why do you not believe? Why are you this way?

And nor is it the word of a soothsayer; little are ye mindful! (42)

وَلَا بِقَوۡلِ كَاهِنٖۚ قَلِيلٗا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝٤٢

The Qur'an is not the word of a soothsayer – some of the disbelievers said that the Messenger was a soothsayer, and that the Qur'an was soothsaying. 'Soothsayer' is given for *kāhin*, someone in touch with devils who brings concocted reports in verse or rhymed prose, the truth of which is less than the false.

... little are ye mindful! That is, little do ye remember of the truth placed within the innate human disposition; or it may mean that few are mindful of the truth.

A sending down from the Lord of the worlds; (43)

تَنزِيلٞ مِّن رَّبِّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ۝٤٣

The Qur'an is sent down from the Lord of the worlds to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

Had he made say against Us any sayings, (44)

وَلَوۡ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيۡنَا بَعۡضَ ٱلۡأَقَاوِيلِ ۝٤٤

That is, had the Messenger invented false sayings and attributed them to Him, glory be to Him. 'Made say' is given for *qawwala*, meaning to invent a saying and attribute it falsely.

We truly would have taken from him the right hand; (45)

لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِٱلْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾

That is, from the Messenger. His hand would be cut off, for the penalty of working corruption in the earth is the loss of the hand. [as indicated in 5:33] It should not be hidden that this passage is a refutation of the disbelievers, for it touches upon the sacred personage of the Messenger. It is in the same category as, *'...he took his brother's head and drew it to him...' [7:151]* that has been discussed.

Thereupon We truly would have cut his aorta, (46)

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ ٱلْوَتِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

That is, We would have cut the primary blood-passages in and out of the Messenger's heart, indicating the totality of his destruction.

Yes, were he a liar He would have done just that:

And not one of ye would be warding off from him. (47)

فَمَا مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَٰجِزِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

None among mankind could have assisted the Messenger or come between him and what Allah would intend for him, and stop such a punishment from happening to him.

And indeed it is a reminder to the guardful; (48)

وَإِنَّهُۥ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

The Qur'an is a reminder of what has been placed man's innate disposition: monotheism and the other principles. The reminder is for the guardful *(al-muttaqin)*, who are guardful against sin, as it is only the person who keeps within the limits and fears degradation and dishonour who will be reminded by the Qur'an. That is, the reminder is particularly for them in the sense that it is them who will profit from it.

And indeed We know that among ye are beliers, (49)

وَإِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنكُم مُّكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

There are those who belie Allah, the Messenger, the Return and the Qur'an as being all lies. This constitutes a warning, in that they will be reckoned with and chastised for their belying the truth.

And indeed it is anguish upon the disbelievers; (50)

وَإِنَّهُۥ لَحَسۡرَةٌ عَلَى ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The Qur'an will be the cause of their anguish on the day of resurrection, due to their not implementing it even though it was within their reach.

And indeed it truly is real certainty; (51)

وَإِنَّهُۥ لَحَقُّ ٱلۡيَقِينِ ﴿٥١﴾

There are types of certainty, and the certainty of the Qur'an reaches a high level on account of its concordance with the reality. There is 'known certainty' *(ʿilm al-yaqīn)* which is the certainty known but not experienced; and 'real certainty' *(ḥaqq al-yaqin),* the certainty both known and experienced. In this respect, the example about fire can be given.

So glorify by the name of thy Lord, the Magnificent. (52)

فَسَبِّحۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلۡعَظِيمِ ﴿٥٢﴾

It means: glorify thy Lord – declare Him above and untainted by all that is unworthy of association with Him, glory be to Him – by the remembrance of His name. And, implied: give no importance to the disbelievers, and proceed with the task as hand, the mission. Pronounce His glory and acclaim and extol Him by declaring Him free of associates and of the low attributes supposed for Him, glory be to Him, by the disbelievers.

Surah al-Ma^c^ārij (70)
'The Paths of Ascension'

سورة المعارج

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *ma^c^ārij,* meaning 'places of ascension', of rising and going up. Like the other Makkan surah*s* it deals with matters of faith, except its opening which was sent down at Madinah. As Surah al-Hāqqah concluded with a warning to the disbelievers, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

In fact, the reason for the descent of the opening part of this surah, as given in a narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq, *peace be upon him*, is that when the Messenger of Allah appointed Imam Ali, as his successor on the day of Ghadir Khum, saying, **'He whose patron (mawlā) I am, then Ali is (also) his patron',** and this news had spread throughout the land. The Messenger was approached by one Nu^c^mān ibn al-Hārith al-Fihri, who asked him: 'O Messenger of Allah! you commanded us from Allah that we declare there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah, and you commanded us to the *jihad*, the *hajj*, the fast, the prayer and the *zakāt*, and we accepted.'

'Then you were not satisfied until you appointed this lad – meaning Imam Ali, who was about 33 – and you said '**He whose patron I am, then Ali is his patron**." Now, is this from you, or is it a command from Allah?'

At that the Messenger said, **'By Allah other than whom there is no god, it is from Allah.'** Then Nu^c^mān turned away, saying, 'O Allah! if that is the truth from Thee, then rain down upon us stones from the sky!' So Allah stoned him with a stone that hit him on the head and killed him. Then Allah sent down the āyah, ***A questioner asked about an occurring chastisement ...*** [End of narration].

This affair is also indicated by His word: *And when they say, 'O Allah, if that is the truth from you then rain stones from the sky upon us, or present us with a painful chastisement.'* [8: 33].

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, … The beginning is by the name of Allah so that it be a blessed beginning that will arrive at goodness.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy by rectifying the shortcomings in His servants' religion, world and hereafter. For whereas the

mercy and compassion in other than Him, glory be to Him, is a quality of the heart that moves a person towards goodness, while His mercy is the bestowal of goodness.

A questioner asked about an occurring chastisement, (1)

سَأَلَ سَآئِلُۢ بِعَذَابٖ وَاقِعٖ ﴿١﴾

That is, a demander demanded and sought chastisement; and you have learned that it was Nuᶜmān al-Fihri. Yet it is probable that the meaning is more general and includes the disbelievers who sought the advancement of the chastisement in mockery.

For the disbelievers, there is none to repel it, (2)

لِّلۡكَٰفِرِينَ لَيۡسَ لَهُۥ دَافِعٞ ﴿٢﴾

The chastisement is for the disbelievers, and will happen to them whether they seek it or not. There is none can prevent it.

From Allah, Holder of the paths of ascension; (3)

مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ ذِي ٱلۡمَعَارِجِ ﴿٣﴾

The chastisement is from Allah, glory be to Him, who possesses the *maᶜārij*, 'the paths of ascension'. Perhaps the meaning is the skies or heavens that are the pathways of ascension for the angels and the souls of the believers. It is accordingly an indication of the loftiness of His status, glory be to Him; for when He intends a thing there is no other way. It must happen.

Thereupon the extent of the height of these pathways is explained, so that it not be imagined that their height is such that the mind of man is familiar with it:

The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him in a day, whose amount is fifty thousand years. (4)

تَعۡرُجُ ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ إِلَيۡهِ فِي يَوۡمٖ كَانَ
مِقۡدَارُهُۥ خَمۡسِينَ أَلۡفَ سَنَةٖ ﴿٤﴾

The angels and the Spirit ... 'The Spirit', *al-rūḥ,* means the great angel [Gabriel].

... ascend unto Him ... The ascension is to that place set by Him, glory be to Him, as the source of His commands and an area for honouring Him, just as He has set the 'House of Allah', the *Kaᶜbah*, that He has set as a proxy for attention towards Him, as Allah is untainted by location.

... in a day, whose amount is fifty thousand years. To ascend from the earth by that path to the place where the ultimate honours are bestowed takes a day, the length of which is fifty thousand of our earthly years.

The phrase has another likely meaning: that the ascension to His honouring will take place on the day of resurrection, the length of which is fifty thousand years. So the āyah indicates either the distance from the earth of the honouring place, or the length of the day of resurrection. Narrations support both interpretations.

So be restrained, a graceful restraining: (5)

فَٱصۡبِرۡ صَبۡرٗا جَمِيلًا ۝٥

The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger; *may Allah bless him and his family.* He was not to despair and was not to be disturbed by the harshness, taunts and belying of the disbelievers.

Indeed they see it as distant, (6)

إِنَّهُمۡ يَرَوۡنَهُۥ بَعِيدٗا ۝٦

Indeed they ... That is, the disbelievers.

... see it as distant, They see that day, the day of resurrection – according to the second interpretation – or the chastisement, as distant, and so they engage in disbelief and disobedience.

While we see it as near. (7)

وَنَرَىٰهُ قَرِيبٗا ۝٧

That is: We know it is near; for everything in the future is near, even if the intervening period is lengthy by human reckoning.

The flow then turns to clarify the nature of that time of chastisement, or of the time of that day:

The day when the sky will be like molten copper, (8)

يَوۡمَ تَكُونُ ٱلسَّمَآءُ كَٱلۡمُهۡلِ ۝٨

To afflict thereby the offenders amongst mankind.

And the mountains will be like wool, (9)

وَتَكُونُ ٱلۡجِبَالُ كَٱلۡعِهۡنِ ۝٩

Like carded, fluffed up wool; reduced to dust the mountains will glide through the air just like wool.

And no boon-companion will ask of a boon-companion (10)

وَلَا يَسْـَٔلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

No friend will have time for another; everyone that day will be occupied with their pressing concerns.

As they are shown them – the offender will love to be redeemed from the chastisement of that day by his sons, (11)

يُبَصَّرُونَهُمْ ۚ يَوَدُّ ٱلْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِى مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍۭ بِبَنِيهِ ﴿١١﴾

As they are shown them – Some of the friends will be shown others but will not ask them how they are. 'They are shown them' is given for *yubassarūnahum,* implying that they are forced to see: they do not wish to see their friends, but their eyes fall on them regardless of their intention.

... the offender will love to be redeemed from the chastisement of that day by his sons! Yes, the disobedient will wish that he could be redeemed from the chastisement of that awful day at the price of his own sons, the dearest of all people to him, so that they would suffer the chastisement in his place.

And his consort and his brother, (12)

وَصَـٰحِبَتِهِۦ وَأَخِيهِ ﴿١٢﴾

That is, he would love to redeem himself by giving his wife for the chastisement, and give his brother just to save himself.

And his kin who sheltered him, (13)

وَفَصِيلَتِهِ ٱلَّتِى تُـْٔوِيهِ ﴿١٣﴾

And redeem himself at the price of his kin, his close relatives, who supported him and sheltered him in times of difficulty.

And whosoever is in the earth, all of them, that it save him. (14)

وَمَن فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يُنجِيهِ ﴿١٤﴾

He would like to substitute for himself every creature, so that this ransom might save him.

Would such a ransom benefit him, were we to assume him capable of it?

Nay; indeed it is a flame, (15)

كَلَّآ ۖ إِنَّهَا لَظَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

Nay; ... That is, nothing will benefit and nothing will save him.

... indeed it is a flame, The fire of hell is pure flame *(la<u>dh</u>ā)*. It means that the offender is for the flames and nothing can save him.

Snatching away at the extremities, (16) نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

'Snatching away' is given for *nazzā*ᶜ*ah*, meaning that the flame greatly overtakes the surface area leaving aside no skin and no flesh. 'The extremities' is given for *al-shawā*, from the verb *shawā*, meaning to roast, as it is the extremities that are roasted by fire.

Calling out 'he who turned around and turned back, (17) تَدْعُوا۟ مَنْ أَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٧﴾

The fire shall itself call, in the roar and blast of its flames, 'he who turned around from the truth – that is, put their back to the truth so as to turn away, and turned back from the religion'

'And amassed and hoarded' (18) وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَىٰٓ ﴿١٨﴾

'And gathered property and wealth and secured it in a hoard, such as in a chest or suchlike, and did not dispense it in obedience to Allah.'

Indeed the human is created avaricious, (19) إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ﴿١٩﴾

'Avaricious' is given for *halū*ᶜ, meaning to be extreme in greed *(ḥirṣ)*.

The Most High then defines the voracious by His word:

When the adverse visits him, fretful, (20) إِذَا مَسَّهُ ٱلشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ﴿٢٠﴾

When he is subjected to adverse things such as poverty, illness, danger and suchlike, he becomes impatient and fretful, rather than being restrained and looking forward to the relief.

And when visited by goodness, withholding; (21) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ ٱلْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ﴿٢١﴾

When he is subject to the good in life, such as wealth, health, security and status, he is extremely grudging and prevents it reaching the people. He fails to

perform the obligatory acts of gratitude in spending freely of his wealth and influence, nor performs the service to the people with his health and security.

Such is human nature and the innate constitution driving him within. However:

Save for the prayers, (22) إِلَّا ٱلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

'Prayers' is given for *muṣallīn,* meaning those who perform the prayer. They connect themselves to Allah, glory be to Him, and raise themselves from the level and temptation of the self or *nafs* through the prayer and performing it, for it is inseparable from belief and the other beautiful qualities.

Those who are constant in their praying; (23) ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

They perform the prayer constantly, for it is the consistent performing of the prayer that reveals to the soul the goodness of the spiritual matters, since the repetition of such performance give rise to the cleansing of the soul; as He has said in a later āyah [#35], *'Those who, they guard their prayer.'*

And those in whose wealth a right is known, (24) وَٱلَّذِينَ فِىٓ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

That is, a portion of their wealth is set aside and given to the poor. It is narrated that by the right known *(ḥaqq maᶜlūm*) is meant beneficence other than the *zakāt*, something a man imposes upon himself and separates from his wealth every day or every week.

For the asker and the deprived. (25) لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَٱلْمَحْرُومِ ﴿٢٥﴾

The wealth is given to the person who asks on account of his poverty. And it is given to the deprived *(maḥrūm);* meaning a person who is poor and without wealth but does not ask people on account of his honour.

And those who confirm the day of requital, (26) وَٱلَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿٢٦﴾

That is, they believe in the resurrection and the day of requital. 'Confirm' is given for *yuṣaddiqun*; perhaps this is to indicate that they heartily confirm all that is to happen on that day.

And those who are afraid of the chastisement of their Lord – (27)

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم مِّنۡ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشۡفِقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

They fear the chastisement of the world and of the hereafter.

Indeed their Lord's chastisement affords not security – (28)

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمۡ غَيۡرُ مَأۡمُونٖ ﴿٢٨﴾

That is, the future occurrence of His chastisement of the disbelievers and the disobedient is not something to make a person feel secure. So it is not fitting for anyone to feel secure about it and be deceived into persisting on disbelief and sin.

And those who guard their private parts, (29)

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ لِفُرُوجِهِمۡ حَٰفِظُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

'Guarding them' means not seeing them as permissible for the sinful acts.

Save before their spouses or what their right hands own: for indeed they are blameless. (30)

إِلَّا عَلَىٰٓ أَزۡوَٰجِهِمۡ أَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ أَيۡمَٰنُهُمۡ فَإِنَّهُمۡ غَيۡرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The exception before their wives covers the wives before their husbands, of necessity. 'What their right hands own' means bondmaids; ownership is attributed to the right hand as it is the means of acquiring the price with which the bondmaids is purchased. 'Temporary marriage' *(mut^{c}ah)* is included in wives. In these cases there is no blame in using the private parts for the pleasures.

So whosoever reaches for more than that – those, they are the violators. (31)

فَمَنِ ٱبۡتَغَىٰ وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡعَادُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

To seek pleasure in other than what is listed – be it in fornication, homosexuality between men or between women, or masturbation – all is transgression of the right and of the limits of the Divine law, deserving of punishment and chastisement.

And those who are faithful of their trusts and covenants, (32)

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ لِأَمَٰنَٰتِهِمۡ وَعَهۡدِهِمۡ رَٰعُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

That is, they neither betray the trusts that are placed with them, nor break their agreements.

And those who are upright in their testimonies, (33)

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِشَهَٰدَٰتِهِمۡ قَآئِمُونَ ٣٣

When the occasion comes for them to give testimony they give testimony truthfully, not falsely, and they do not flee from giving testimony out of fear or greed.

And those who guard their prayer. (34)

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمۡ يُحَافِظُونَ ٣٤

It seems that 'guarding' the prayer is performing it properly according to its rules and in the right spirit. And they do so with constancy. Or the earlier āyah (#23, using the term 'constant') is about the optional/recommended prayers *(nawāfil)*, while this āyah, using the term 'guarding', is about the obligatory prayers, as narrated from Imam al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him.*

Those are in gardens, honoured. (35)

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ فِي جَنَّٰتٖ مُّكۡرَمُونَ ٣٥

The believers thus described are in gardens secluded by trees and palaces. They are honoured by Allah, glory be to Him, and His angels, and so are blessed with blessings material and spiritual.

Now, considering that the truth is clear,

So what is with the disbelievers, glaring at thee? (36)

فَمَالِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ قِبَلَكَ مُهۡطِعِينَ ٣٦

O Messenger of Allah, what is wrong with the disbelievers and what drives them to do what they do? Glaring is given for *muhṭa^{c}īn*, meaning to look constantly at a thing without breaking off the stare; which indicates either love or enmity. Here it is the second of these that is intended. The āyah means: what is with the disbelievers that they look at you malignantly with enmity and aggression?

From the right and from the left, in groups? (37)

عَنِ ٱلۡيَمِينِ وَعَنِ ٱلشِّمَالِ عِزِينَ ٣٧

They would approach the Messenger, group-by-group and gang-by-gang, from his right and his left, while glaring at him. And such is normally the way with people when a reformer appears amongst them: they cleave to each other in

groups and stare at him from every direction when he is in a place or passes by a place.

Does each one among them lust to enter a garden of bliss? (38)

أَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ ٱمْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

Do those disbelievers wish to be in a garden of bliss? What a feeble-minded hope they must have, after all their disbelief and stubbornness! After having given vent to their hatred of the Messenger and looked at him with such aggression, do they expect this to have earned them the contentment of Allah, so that He will enter them into His garden?

Nay, We created them from what they know. (39)

كَلَّآ ۖ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰهُم مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Nay, ... Nay, they will not enter the garden.

... We created them from what they know. Allah created them from an unclean droplet: will whoever is an unclean droplet by origin enter the garden without faith and good deeds? For a thing is measured either by its origins or its actions. Their origin is a dirty droplet, their deeds are disbelief and disobedience, so they are not fit to be entered into the garden.

So I swear not by the Lord of the easts and the wests that We are surely able (40)

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ ٱلْمَشَٰرِقِ وَٱلْمَغَٰرِبِ إِنَّا لَقَٰدِرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

'Not' *(lā)* is for negation. The phrase is suggestive of an oath, while it is not an oath – as has been explained. 'Easts' and 'wests' are pluralized on account of how each day the sun rises and sets in a different place.

To substitute them with better than them; and We are not such as to be outrun. (41)

عَلَىٰٓ أَن نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

To substitute them with better than them; ... That is, Allah is in power over them sufficient to destroy them and bring in their place a believing people who would not disobey.

... and We are not such as to be outrun. And Allah is not such as to be outrun; no disbeliever can escape Him by running away and putting themselves beyond Him and safe from His chastisement of them, in the way that a worldly ruler can be outrun by a felon who escapes from him and puts himself beyond his punishment.

So leave them to plunge and play, till they meet their day that they are promised: (42)

فَذَرۡهُمۡ يَخُوضُواْ وَيَلۡعَبُواْ حَتَّىٰ يُلَٰقُواْ يَوۡمَهُمُ
ٱلَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

The Messenger was to leave those disbelievers to indulge in their vanities and falsehood. 'Plunge' is given for *yakhūdhū*, meaning to become immersed in water. It is used figuratively for those engaged in falsehood, as if they are immersed in it. And let them play, for play is the doing of things without serious purpose, for the attainment of no end other than the passing of time. Until they meet the day they have been promised, the day of resurrection.

Then He explains that day, glory be to Him, with His word:

The day they leave the tombs speedily, as if they are rushing to their idols, (43)

يَوۡمَ يَخۡرُجُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡأَجۡدَاثِ سِرَاعٗا كَأَنَّهُمۡ إِلَىٰ
نُصُبٖ يُوفِضُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

They will be as if in a hurry on account of the terror they are experiencing, for terror makes a person rush towards safety before being caught up in the chastisement. In the world they rushed about so as to observe the festivals of their idolatry, so there too they will rush about after their departure from the graves,

Their gazes humbled, lowliness weighs them down. That is the day that they have been promised. (44)

خَٰشِعَةً أَبۡصَٰرُهُمۡ تَرۡهَقُهُمۡ ذِلَّةٞۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡيَوۡمُ
ٱلَّذِي كَانُواْ يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

Their gazes humbled ... They will be humbled that day, the signs of their humiliation showing on their faces; for the effects of humiliation appear in the eye. And they will not be able to hold up their gaze that day, in fear and terror.

... lowliness weighs them down ... Lowliness and abasement *(dhilla)* will cover them, for they will be aware of their sins, and that they are to be condemned on their account to the chastisement.

... That is the day that they were promised. They were promised that day while in the world, but they denied it; then they will be delivered to it and discover its chastisement and terror.

Surah Nūḥ (71)
‘Noah’

سورة نوح

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the name and story of Noah, *peace be upon him.* Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith, but in the form of a narrative. While Surah al-Maᶜārij concluded with a warning to the disbelievers, this surah opens on the theme of Noah, and the resistance he met from his people, thereby constituting a consolation for the Messenger, and a warning for the disbelievers.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, … We seek help by the name of Allah, that He assist us in the important affairs, and in this affair we are beginning, in particular.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on whoever seeks from Him mercy and ease in matters.

Indeed We sent Noah to his people, that ‘Warn thy people before there comes to them a painful chastisement.’ (1)

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦٓ أَنْ أَنذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

That is, the Messenger Nūḥ (Noah), was sent as a Messenger for his people, and words of revelation descended upon him thus: ‘Warn thy people, that if they persist in disbelief and disobedience they will be afflicted with the chastisement in the world and the chastisement of the hereafter, and be subjected to great pain.’

Noah, obeyed the command:

He said, 'O my people, indeed I am for ye a clear warner, (2)

قَالَ يَـٰقَوْمِ إِنِّى لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢﴾

He told his people that he was a clear warner for them.

‘That ye worship Allah and be guardful of Him and obey me; (3)

أَنِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱتَّقُوهُ وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿٣﴾

He called his people to worship Allah and not disbelieve in Him, to be guardful of Him and not disobey Him, and to obey the directives of Noah, that constituted the divine code *(shariᶜah).*

‘He will forgive ye your sins, and defer ye until a stated term; surely Allah's term, when it comes, is not deferred, were ye knowing.’ (4)

يَغْفِرْ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ أَجَلَ ٱللَّهِ إِذَا جَآءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ ۖ لَوْ كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

He will forgive ye your sins, ... He told them that were they to worship Allah and be guardful towards Him, He would forgive them all their sins. ‘your sins’ is given for *min dhunūbikum* – the word *min* designates the genus of their sins, i.e. all your (past) sins.

... and defer ye until a stated term; ... That is, instead of quickly destroying them, He would have given them some respite until ‘a stated term’ *(ajalin musammā),* meaning a period stated in His book; in contrast to the disbeliever who faced the chastisement of death.

... surely Allah's term, when it comes, is not deferred, ... The term of Allah, the term determined by Allah, is subject to no delay once its time arrives. So they were to be quick about believing and repenting before the time was up.

... were ye knowing.’ That is, If only they acted rightly they would have known all this.

Noah called his people for a lengthy period with guidance and advices like this, yet his calling had no affect on them, so he turned to Allah, glory be to Him, and supplicated:

He said, 'My Lord! Indeed I have called my people by night and by day, (5)

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِى لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ﴿٥﴾

He said, 'My Lord! Indeed I have called my people ... Noah had summoned his people to belief.

... by night and by day, At all times.

'But my calling has not increased them except in flight; (6)

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَآءِىٓ إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿٦﴾

His summoning them only led the disbelievers to arrange their ranks, and pronounce their disbelief, their disobedience and their flight from the truth.

'And indeed, whenever I called them that Thou forgive them, they placed their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments, persisted, and they sought hauteur, haughtily.' (7)

وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوٓاْ أَصَٰبِعَهُمْ فِيٓ ءَاذَانِهِمْ وَٱسْتَغْشَوْاْ ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصَرُّواْ وَٱسْتَكْبَرُواْ ٱسْتِكْبَارًا ۝٧

'And indeed, whenever I called them that Thou forgive them, ... The more he called them to the belief and to obedience for Allah to forgive them on account of their believing and being obedient,

... they placed their fingers in their ears, ... They would simply put their fingers in their ears so as not to hear him,

... covered themselves with their garments, ... They would wrap their garments around their heads and faces so as not to see him.

... persisted, ... They would continue in their disbelief and disobedience.

... and they sought hauteur, haughtily.' They would arrogantly and scornfully disdain from accepting the truth. 'Haughty' is given for *istikbar*, which seems to indicate that they sought greatness, while in reality they were not great.

Thereupon, 'Indeed I called to them publicly.' (8)

ثُمَّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا ۝٨

'Thereupon' *(thumma)*, denotes order in speech, not in the topic itself. 'Publicly' is given for *jihāran*, meaning that he called to them aloud, at the top of his voice.

Thereupon, 'I proclaimed for them and I spoke in confidence to them, in secret.' (9)

ثُمَّ إِنِّيٓ أَعْلَنتُ لَهُمْ وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا ۝٩

He summoned them in proclamations and he spoke to them privately, secretly. The meaning is that he called them in every way possible. Calling them publicly *(jihr)* is covered by proclamation *(iʿlān)*, of which it is a type, so there is no repetition in the use of *iʿlān* (proclamation) after *jihar* (in full voice).

'And I said, "Seek forgiveness from your Lord, indeed He is greatly-forgiving.' (10)

فَقُلْتُ ٱسْتَغْفِرُواْ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ۝١٠

He called on the people to seek the forgiveness of their Lord through belief and obedience; reminding them that He is *Ghaffār*, greatly-forgiving of those who seek His forgiveness.

Had they sought His forgiveness:

"He will send the sky upon ye in torrents. (11)

يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا ﴿١١﴾

'Torrents' is given for *midrār*, meaning plenteous rain. It is said that rainfall had been denied them, until they had reached the point of being afflicted by drought, and so Noah sought to encourage them in this way.

And will extend ye in wealth and in sons, and will put for ye gardens and will put for ye rivers. (12)

وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا ﴿١٢﴾

That is, increase their wealth and increase their male children. [as the male siblings were nominally considered by society to be able to produce wealth.] By means of the rain and their wealth they would have acquired gardens, and rivers would have watered their gardens. Rain when it is plenteous gathers in the earth, and then it bursts out of springs, which form rivers.

'What is with ye, that ye hope not for dignity in Allah? (13)

مَّا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا ﴿١٣﴾

What is with ye, O community of disbelievers, that you do not recognise Allah, glory be to Him, as dignified, as great? 'dignity' is given for *(waqār),* and 'hope for' is given for *rajā'* in that one hopes for something that is good and desirable. Thus whoever sees no greatness and dignity in a person has no hope in that person. So it seems he said: what is with you that you have no hope in Allah? Do you not acknowledge His dignity, His greatness, His magnificence?

'While He certainly created ye in diverse states? (14)

وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا ﴿١٤﴾

'Diverse states' is given for *aṭwār,* plural of *ṭawr* meaning state, or appearance. The verse therefore means man passes from one state to another until arriving at the state he is in. Or the meaning is that He created man in diversity, each person different to the other; in what signifies His perfect capability.

And just as the signs of the magnificence of Allah, glory be to Him, are evident within yourselves, so they are evident in the external world:

Do ye not see how Allah created seven skies in levels? (15)

أَلَمۡ تَرَوۡاْ كَيۡفَ خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ سَبۡعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٖ طِبَاقٗا ﴿١٥﴾

The address is plural to the disbelievers. In 'do ye not see' it is meant 'do ye not know'. 'Skies' in this context is in reference to the planetary orbits. 'In levels' is given for *ṭibāqan* meaning one above another. [The planetary orbits are referred to as seven in this verse since the number of planets orbiting the sun was considered by the people at the time to be seven.]

'And put the moon amidst them as a light and put the sun as a lamp? (16)

وَجَعَلَ ٱلۡقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورٗا وَجَعَلَ ٱلشَّمۡسَ سِرَاجٗا ﴿١٦﴾

'Amidst them' means amidst the skies. The moon is a light that gives light by its radiance. The sun is a lamp whose rays light up the darkness of the world.

'And Allah had ye grow from the earth as vegetation? (17)

وَٱللَّهُ أَنۢبَتَكُم مِّنَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ نَبَاتٗا ﴿١٧﴾

The human being grows out of the earth much like a plant grows out of the earth. The difference is that the earth turns into vegetation, while man eats vegetation that becomes sperm and then a human being, while the plants are vegetation from the beginning. In reality the human is the animated vegetation of the earth, just as plants are the inanimate or stationary vegetation of the earth.

'And then He returns ye in it, and He brings ye out, a bringing forth. (18)

ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمۡ فِيهَا وَيُخۡرِجُكُمۡ إِخۡرَاجٗا ﴿١٨﴾

He returns us into the earth, for without delay the corpse decays and becomes earth, as it was before. And He brings us out of the earth again on the day of resurrection. The repetition is to convey emphasis and the fact that it is a real event, with no room for doubt.

'And Allah made for ye the earth outstretched? (19)

وَٱللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ بِسَاطٗا ﴿١٩﴾

The earth is such that man is enabled to walk upon it and build upon it, and fulfil his other purposes with it.

The thread then explains one of the favours Allah has prepared for the human being by His spreading wide the earth:

'That ye journey its wide paths.' (20) لِّتَسۡلُكُواْ مِنۡهَا سُبُلٗا فِجَاجٗا ٢٠

'Wide' is given for *fijājan*, meaning paths that are wide and various. The meaning of the āyah is: so that you are enabled to travel the variety of the earth's pathways for your needs here and there.

Yet after all such reminders and indications of these great blessings, still the people did not accept Noah's call, and so Noah directed himself to his Lord:

Said Noah, 'My Lord, indeed they disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children increase him in nothing but loss. (21)

قَالَ نُوحٞ رَّبِّ إِنَّهُمۡ عَصَوۡنِي وَٱتَّبَعُواْ مَن لَّمۡ
يَزِدۡهُ مَالُهُۥ وَوَلَدُهُۥٓ إِلَّا خَسَارٗا ٢١

Noah's people disobeyed him by not believing in Allah, and by not accepting Noah's commands. Instead, they were following the leading men of their people, who were the head of corruption. The more they were increased in wealth the more they disposed of it in evil, and the more they were increased in children the more they deviated them from the path of truth; and so their wealth and children increased them in nothing but loss and damage; that is, in things that would lead to their increase in punishment and chastisement.

And they plotted great plots, (22) وَمَكَرُواْ مَكۡرٗا كُبَّارٗا ٢٢

They plotted against Noah, and their plots were great in consideration of their purpose; for the containment of the teachings of the Messenger requires sophisticated strategies. Otherwise, mankind in their natural simplicity are inclined to follow the truth. Those who plotted were either the leaders of that people, indicated by the word 'him' *(man)* in the previous āyah, or that people in general.

And they said "Be sure not to leave your gods", and, "Be sure not to leave Wadd, and not Suwa^{c}, and not Yaghuth, Ya^{c}uq and Nasr." (23)

وَقَالُواْ لَا تَذَرُنَّ ءَالِهَتَكُمۡ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدّٗا وَلَا
سُوَاعٗا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسۡرٗا ٢٣

The plotters said to the rest of the people: do not turn away from your idols in obedience to Noah and his call for you to worship the one God. They then listed by name those of their gods who were the major idols among them: Wadd, Suwā^c, Yaghuth, Ya^cuq and Nasr. The omission of 'not' *(la*) between these last two is on account of the flow of eloquence. These were the names of idols they worshipped instead of Allah, glory be to Him. And it has been stated that these names were originally the names of righteous men: after they died, statues were made of them and these were honoured on account of them being symbols of those great men – then, lured by the devil, they worshipped those statues.

And truly they have sent many astray. And increase not the wrongful except in straying.' (24)

وَقَدۡ أَضَلُّواْ كَثِيرٗاۖ وَلَا تَزِدِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَٰلٗا ٢٤

And truly they have sent many astray ... Attributing to the idols the act of sending astray is on account of how they were the means of that act.

... And increase not the wrongful ... The wrongful *(al-dhālimīn)* were those who wronged themselves through disbelief and disobedience, and wronged others by leading astray and increasing corruption.

... except in straying.' That is, in nothing but deviation, as the recompense of their stubbornness and persistence in corruption. The increase in deviation would be by depriving them of the hidden graces.

The flow then explains the end in store for these disbelievers, in His word:

For their errors they were drowned, then they were made to enter fire, and they shall find for themselves besides Allah no succourers. (25)

مِّمَّا خَطِيٓـَٰٔتِهِمۡ أُغۡرِقُواْ فَأُدۡخِلُواْ نَارٗا فَلَمۡ يَجِدُواْ لَهُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَنصَارٗا ٢٥

For their errors they were drowned, ... On account of the sins of these disbelievers they were drowned in water in the world.

... then they were made to enter fire, ... They were put into the fire in the hereafter; and so they were subjected to the two contrasting chastisements.

... and they shall find for themselves besides Allah no succourers Those disbelievers will find for themselves no one to ward off the chastisement of God, for those who promised them their succour will not be with them.

And said Noah, 'My Lord, leave upon the earth not an inhabitant from among the disbelievers!' (26)

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ مِنَ
ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ دَيَّارًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And said Noah, 'My Lord, ... This was his prayer against them before they drowned. It is placed after the drowning in the discourse on account of how it was the straying that expedited the chastisement, as if between the straying and the chastisement there were no interval.

... leave upon the earth not an inhabitant from among the disbelievers!' His prayer was to leave and let live not a person from amongst the disbelievers to be 'an inhabitant' *(dayyār),* or settle in an habitation, but to let the chastisement encompass them all.

Noah, then explains the cause of this prayer against them, in the Word.

'Indeed, if Thou leave them they will send astray Thy servants, and will breed none but brazen, extreme disbelievers. (27)

إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا۟ عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوٓا۟ إِلَّا
فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا ﴿٢٧﴾

They would send astray the offspring of the believers, and themselves would raise no offspring save those brazen in disobedience and extreme in disbelieving, corrupt in both belief and action, with no good in them. This was known to Noah, through the process of revelation.

'My Lord, forgive me, and my parents, and those who enter my house believing, and the believers and the believeresses; and increase not the wrongful save in annihilation. (28)

رَّبِّ ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَلِوَٰلِدَىَّ وَلِمَن دَخَلَ بَيْتِىَ
مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ
ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًۢا ﴿٢٨﴾

My Lord, forgive me ... It has already been seen that seeking forgiveness on the part of the Messengers and Imams is on account of what essential permitted, but not laudable, works they have done, for they see such works as incongruous with proper behaviour before Allah, the magnificent sovereign. It

is much like the man who is forced to lie down before a king [or a respected guest, say], due to illness or suchlike, sees his lying down as improper, and excuses himself for doing so.

... and my parents ... The prayer for his parents was for forgiveness for their sins.

... and those who enter my house believing, ... He prayed for those who entered his house as believers. It seems as if 'entering into his house' was indicative of their entering the ranks of his followers and supporters, as those who believed in him, were a small number between seventy and eighty, according to what has been related.

... and the believers and the believeresses ... He prayed for the believers, male and female, of other nations, both before his time and after it. .

... and increase not the wrongful save in annihilation. He prayed that the disbelievers might be increased in nothing but destruction and loss, by the withdrawal of grace from them, so that their continued existence would be the cause of their increased punishment and diminishment, in return for their obstinacy.

Surah al-Jinn (72)

'The Jinn'

سورة الجن

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *jinn*, and an account about them. Like the other Makkan surah*s*, it deals with matters of faith, in a narrative manner novel and lovely. As Surah Nūḥ concluded with a prayer for the believers and destruction for the disbelievers, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning by the name of Allah, the Creator, the Sovereign of all things. To begin in His name is more proper than beginning by the name of any other. The disbelievers used to begin by the name of the idols, and the Christians would begin by the name of the father, the son and the Holy Ghost, while democrats today begin in the name of the people, while the monarchists begin in the name of his majesty. Allah is more worthy than all of beginning in His name.

... The Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on the servants in the world and in the hereafter.

Say: It is revealed unto me that a company of the jinn has listened and said, "we have heard an amazing Recital; (1)

قُلۡ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ ٱسۡتَمَعَ نَفَرٞ مِّنَ ٱلۡجِنِّ فَقَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا سَمِعۡنَا قُرۡءَانًا عَجَبٗا ﴿١﴾

Say: ... That is, the Messenger was to tell the people.

... It is revealed unto me ... 'Revealed', *uwḥiya* from *waḥy*, means the inspiration received by the Messenger from Allah via the angels, or through direct transmission to his heart with no intermediary. Sometimes the word is used in a general sense, as in His word *'And thy Lord revealed unto the bee...'* [16: 68], *'… and revealed unto each sky its affair …'* [41:12] and *'And We revealed unto the mother of Moses ...'* [28: 7].

... that a body of the jinn have listened ... A party from amongst the jinn had listened to the Qur'an. The jinn are a creation from fire, insubstantial like the air. They are able to take form in solid bodies, like human bodies.

... and said, 'We have heard an amazing Recital; Amongst these jinn some said that what they had heard from the Messenger was an amazing, astonishing recital, for it was wondrous both verbally and in content. 'Recital' is given for *qur'ān.* Their account has been dealt with in *Surah al-Aḥqāf* [# 46; verses 29-31].

It guides to integrity, so we have believed in it and we will never partner a one unto our Lord; (2)

يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلرُّشۡدِ فَـَٔامَنَّا بِهِۦۖ وَلَن نُّشۡرِكَ بِرَبِّنَآ أَحَدٗا ۝٢

It demonstrates the guidance from which comes morality and rectitude. Those jinn believed in the Qur'an, and after hearing it determined never to ascribe a partner for their Lord.

And indeed He – exalted be the majesty of our Lord – takes no consort and no son. (3)

وَأَنَّهُۥ تَعَٰلَىٰ جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا ٱتَّخَذَ صَٰحِبَةٗ وَلَا وَلَدٗا ۝٣

His grandeur and magnificence are far above there being a partner for Him, a wife or a son. Allah, glory be to Him, has not taken a wife, nor a son. Some of the disbelievers maintained that He, glory be to Him, had taken a wife from amongst the jinn; as He says, *'And they maintain a kinship between Him and the jinn...'* [37: 158]. Therefore the jinn denied this claim.

And indeed the foolish among us has spoken extravagances about Allah. (4)

وَأَنَّهُۥ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَفِيهُنَا عَلَى ٱللَّهِ شَطَطٗا ۝٤

Those who are meant are the ignorant type from among themselves. 'Extravagances' is given for *shaṭaṭ*, lies distant from the truth. It seems that what is meant is the nonsense that was current among them that He had married a jinn. Or it may be that meant by 'the foolish among' them is the person of Satan – Iblīs – who is of the jinn, and by the 'extravagances' what the devil says about Allah, glory be to Him, and his assigning partners to Him and suchlike.

And indeed we had supposed that no humans or jinns would ever say of Allah a lie. (5)

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ أَن لَّن تَقُولَ ٱلۡإِنسُ وَٱلۡجِنُّ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ كَذِبٗا ۝٥

The lie of that fool had become clear for them, after they had been supposing that what was being said about Allah, glory be to Him, having a partner, a wife and a son, was true. But it had become clear for them that it was all lies.

And indeed men from the humans used to take shelter with men from the jinn, so they increased them in rebellion. (6)	وَأَنَّهُۥ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ ٱلۡإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ ٱلۡجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمۡ رَهَقًا ﴿٦﴾

And indeed men from the humans used to take shelter with men from the jinn, ... There were those Arabs who, on setting down at a riverbed for the night, would say 'I shelter with the Grand One of this river bed from the evil of the fool of his people.' From Imam al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him,* it is narrated that a man would rush to a witch who was inspired by the devil, and would say to him, 'Tell your devil that so and so has sought shelter with you.' [End of narration.]

... so they increased them in rebellion ... The humans who took refuge with the jinn were increased by them in 'being overtaken' *(rahaq)* by sin and rebellion, in that they considered the jinn as their helpers. The pronoun 'them' could be referring to the jinn and therefore it could be that the jinn were increased by the humans in rebelliousness, when the humans took refuge with the jinn, on the suspicion that the latter have influence in the creation.

And indeed they supposed as ye supposed, that Allah would never send anyone. (7)	وَأَنَّهُمۡ ظَنُّواْ كَمَا ظَنَنتُمۡ أَن لَّن يَبۡعَثَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٗا ﴿٧﴾

That is, the humans supposed as that group of jinn used to suppose, that Allah would not send anyone as a messenger. These words were spoken by the jinn who believed in the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family.*

And indeed we have touched the sky and we found it filled with severe guards and meteoroids, (8)	وَأَنَّا لَمَسۡنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدۡنَٰهَا مُلِئَتۡ حَرَسٗا شَدِيدٗا وَشُهُبٗا ﴿٨﴾

And indeed we have touched the sky ... That is, they touched the sky by attempting to ascend through the various levels of space.

... and we found it filled with severe guards and meteoroids, They found it guarded by strong guardians from amongst the angels, and by meteoroids and bolides, kept in readiness to fire upon any devil who seeks to eavesdropping.

And indeed we used to sit thereof on seats to hear, but whoever listens now finds for himself a meteoroid in ambush. (9)

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَٰعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ۖ فَمَن يَسْتَمِعِ ٱلْـَٔانَ يَجِدْ لَهُۥ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا ﴿٩﴾

The jinn used to sit in places in the heavens, and occupy stations close to the meeting places of the angels, so as to listen to whatever was passing between them about the earth, and this news they would bring to a witch. This lasted until the birth of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*, or until the start of his mission. After that, any of them who would listen to the conversations of the angels would find himself ambushed by a shooting star that had been lying in wait. For among the stars are stations given over to the protection of the skies from the devils of the jinn, so whenever one of them approaches to steal information, shooting stars are hurled at him, hitting or forcing him to flee.

It is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq, *peace be upon him*, in a narration that mentions the reason for the soothsayers' knowledge:

'As for the news from the sky – indeed the devils used to sit in stations for the stealing of information, they were not rebuffed and not shot at with stars. They were only prohibited from stealing information so that there should not occur in the earth anything from the skies to resemble the revelation, with which to confuse mankind about the clear proofs and denials of ambiguity. For the devil would steal a single piece of the information in the sky about what Allah had decreed for His creatures, and grasp it and bring it down to the earth, and cast it to a witch. But he would add to it some words of his own and mix the true with the false, so that what the witch accurately predicted was the information given to him by his devil from what he had heard, while his mistakes were what the devil had added. Since the devils have been prevented from stealing information, witchcraft and soothsaying has terminated.'

And we comprehend not whether evil is intended for whosoever is in the earth, or whether their Lord wants for them integrity. (10)

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِىٓ أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

They did not know whether their being stoned away and the cessation of their information about the punishments of the people of the world, meant that they were due for an unexpected chastisement, or whether it meant their integrity in that a Prophet was to be sent amongst them. In other words, stoning the devils was either for the harm or the benefit of mankind, but the jinn at that time did not know which. This supports the view that the stoning of the jinn began at the time of the birth of the Messenger, and that the jinn are speaking in the past tense. For they become aware of the announcement after a while, especially after they had visited the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family.*

And indeed amongst us are the virtuous, and amongst us are lower than that; we were diverse avenues. (11)	وَأَنَّا مِنَّا ٱلصَّـٰلِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَآئِقَ قِدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

And indeed amongst us are the virtuous, ... Some of that company of jinn believed and performed the virtuous deeds.

... and among us are lower than that; ... Others among them were not so virtuous. The matter is put in this way to encompass their various sects.

... We were diverse avenues. They were on different ‘avenues’ *(ṭarāʼiq,* plural of *ṭarīqa*). ‘Diverse’ is put for *qidad,* meaning fragments, as if each sect had a different colour, and each was a fragment differing from other fragments. It seems this citing of the words of the jinn is to explain the truth about them, and to clarify their position and condition.

And indeed we supposed that we cannot frustrate Allah in the earth, nor frustrate Him by escaping. (12)	وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ ٱللَّهَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُۥ هَرَبًا ﴿١٢﴾

'And indeed we supposed that we cannot frustrate Allah in the earth, ... They supposed that they could not gather in sufficient numbers nor prepare force to the extent that He, glory be to Him, would be unable to dispose of them as He likes. The word suppose *(dhann)* is used either on account of them only supposing and not having certainty, or so as to explain that the supposition is sufficient in the absence of contrary evidence about Him, glory be to Him.

... nor frustrate Him by escaping. They realised they could not frustrate Him by escaping from His power, for His power is all-encompassing from which escape is impossible.

And indeed, when we heard the guidance we believed in it; so whoever believes in his Lord fears neither diminishment nor being overtaken. (13)

وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعۡنَا ٱلۡهُدَىٰٓ ءَامَنَّا بِهِۦۖ فَمَن
يُؤۡمِنۢ بِرَبِّهِۦ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخۡسٗا وَلَا رَهَقٗا ١٣

And indeed, when we heard the guidance ... It means the Qur'an recited by the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family*.

... we believed in it ... They believed in this guidance, which is Islam.

... so whoever believes in his Lord fears neither diminishment nor being overtaken. Whoever believes in Allah with a correct belief, has no fear of his right being not fully delivered in the world and in the hereafter. Nor does he fear being overcome by injustice or rebellion, for Allah, glory be to Him, is just and treats none unjustly. This is not true for other than the believer, for he fears loss, in that his good deeds are annulled by his evil deeds, and he fears being overcome by sin.

And indeed, among us are the muslims and among us are the diverted; so whoever entered Islam, they have sought integrity. (14)

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا ٱلۡمُسۡلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا ٱلۡقَٰسِطُونَۖ فَمَنۡ
أَسۡلَمَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ تَحَرَّوۡاْ رَشَدٗا ١٤

muslims means those who have surrendered (to the will of Allah). Some of them entered the religion of Allah brought by the Prophet Muhammad *may Allah bless him and his family*. Others deviated and turned aside from the path of the truth. Those who submitted to the will of Allah entered Islam and have sought rectitude, that is to say the guidance in which there is certainly rectitude and reason.

As for the diverted, they are firewood for Hell." (15)

وَأَمَّا ٱلۡقَٰسِطُونَ فَكَانُواْ لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبٗا ١٥

Those who have turned away from the true path are for the fire; they shall be thrust into it and shall fuel it just as firewood fuels a fire; as He says in His word, *'...whose fuel is the people and the stones.'* [2: 25]

– And would they be steadfast on the path, We would certainly give them to drink of water copious; (16)

وَأَلَّوِ ٱسۡتَقَٰمُواْ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسۡقَيۡنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقٗا ١٦

Had they not deviated but remained on the path of the truth and not strayed from it, they would have been given plentiful water to drink, a term that indicates the grace they would have received. This phrase is the beginning of the speech of Allah, glory be to Him, interposed within His report of the speech of the jinn.

That we might try them therein; and whoever turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will thrust him into chastisement ascending. (17)

لِّنَفۡتِنَهُمۡ فِيهِۚ وَمَن يُعۡرِضۡ عَن ذِكۡرِ رَبِّهِۦ يَسۡلُكۡهُ عَذَابٗا صَعَدٗا ١٧

That we might try them therein, ... That is, Allah would give them water copious so as to try them with that abundance, for such favours are a trial, just as adversities are a test. The purpose of such trials is the disclosure of secrets, so as to clarify what a person deserves in the hereafter. Or it explains the sending of the guidance, in that the Messenger was sent and the guidance was descended as a trial.

... and whoever turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, ... And takes instead the path of disbelief and disobedience.

... He will thrust him into chastisement ascending. Allah will enter him into the chastisement ascending *(ᶜadhāb ṣaᶜad),* a chastisement that rises over him and encompasses him from head to toe. Or it may mean a chastisement that is heavy and severe.

Having clarified that the guidance is for a trial, the thread turns to explain that it is not proper for anyone to be subservient to any but Allah:

And the places of prostration are for Allah, so call not with Allah anyone – (18)

وَأَنَّ ٱلۡمَسَٰجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدۡعُواْ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ أَحَدٗا ١٨

'places of prostration' is given for *masājid*, the plural of *masjid.* Here what is meant are the [seven] points of prostration on the body – the forehead, the

palms and [the knees, and the feet]. These are for Allah: created by Him, and in the possession of His sacred essence. So do not call on anyone alongside Him; how could you call on other than Him with a bodily part that is His? It is also likely that here the *masājid* or 'places of prostration' is general and includes what has been stated as well as the constructed places of prostration, mosques, meaning that we should not call on other than him, glory be to Him, within them – given that the polytheists prayed to their idols within the house of Allah, the Most High, in Makkah.

'And indeed, when the servant of Allah stood to call Him they were well-nigh upon him in swarms.' (19)

وَأَنَّهُۥ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبۡدُ ٱللَّهِ يَدۡعُوهُ كَادُواْ يَكُونُونَ عَلَيۡهِ لِبَدٗا ﴿١٩﴾

When the Messenger of Allah called to Allah, the One, glory be to Him, the disbelievers were almost upon him in swarms, to prevent him from his call. It would appear that this concludes the speech of the jinn, and that the previous three āyāt are an interjection.

Say: 'I only call my Lord, and I do not associate with Him anyone.'(20)

قُلۡ إِنَّمَآ أَدۡعُواْ رَبِّي وَلَآ أُشۡرِكُ بِهِۦٓ أَحَدٗا ﴿٢٠﴾

Say, O Messenger, to those disbelievers: I call on my Lord, the One and Alone, and I associate none with my Lord. That is not some innovation, to cause you to gather against me and seek to prevent me.

Say: 'Indeed I possess neither your adversity nor your integrity – (21)

قُلۡ إِنِّي لَآ أَمۡلِكُ لَكُمۡ ضَرّٗا وَلَا رَشَدٗا ﴿٢١﴾

Again the address is to the Messenger. He was to tell the disbelievers he had no power to harm them, nor to set them aright; for harm and rectitude are in the hand of Allah. He it is who ordered the Messenger to guide them; if they failed to accept, then He would send harm down upon them. This was to explain that he was merely the Messenger of Allah, with no power save that of guidance.

And the same was true of himself; his own harm and benefit was not in his own hand:

Say: 'None can ever harbour me from Allah, and I find besides Him no sanctuary!' (22)

قُلۡ إِنِّي لَن يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ ٱللَّهِ أَحَدٞ وَلَنۡ أَجِدَ مِن دُونِهِۦ مُلۡتَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

None could save the Messenger himself from the decree of Allah, had He, glory be to Him, intended him harm. Nor could he have found a refuge with which to take shelter from Allah, glory be to Him. A frightened person continually seeks a refuge at the difficulties of the path.

Indeed the Messenger possessed nothing–

'Save conveyance from Allah, and His messages.' And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger – indeed for him is the fire of Hell; they are in it eternal, forever. (23)

إِلَّا بَلَـٰغًا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرِسَـٰلَـٰتِهِۦ ۚ وَمَن يَعْصِ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ فَإِنَّ لَهُۥ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾

'Save conveyance from Allah, and His messages ... The Messenger's role was to convey the āyāt he received from Allah, and His messages.

... And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger ... That is, disobeys Allah by not obeying His commands, and disobeys the Messenger by not following his orders and prohibitions,

... indeed for him is the fire of Hell; ... His disobedience will be recompensed by the fire of hell.

... they are in it eternal, forever They will be eternal there *(khālidīn fīhā)*, forever *(abadā)*. The change in pronoun from the singular to the plural is because the former is in agreement with the singular 'whosoever' *(man)*, while the plural is in agreement with the implicit content.

But the disbelievers are presently not bothered about the fire–

Until, when they see what they were promised, then they shall know who is feebler in succourers and smaller in numbers. (24)

حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا رَأَوْا۟ مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

When the disbelievers see the chastisement of which they were warned while in the world, they shall then know whether those fighting for the Messenger are weaker or their own succourers, and whether the Messenger's troops and companions were few in numbers or their own troops and companions. The disbelievers used to boast to the Messenger about their large numbers and the weakness of his helpers. And so the revelation turns to explain how on the day of resurrection things are totally reversed, and that their numbers will be scattered and their helpers helpless, unable to save them from the chastisement of Allah, glory be to Him.

And the disbelievers used to pressure the Messenger to hasten the chastisement upon them, in a sense of mockery. This the discussion now deals with, in His word.

Say: I comprehend not whether what ye are promised is near, or whether my Lord will set for it an interval. (25)

قُلۡ إِنۡ أَدۡرِيٓ أَقَرِيبٞ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ أَمۡ يَجۡعَلُ لَهُۥ رَبِّيٓ أَمَدًا ٢٥

The Messenger was to tell those disbelievers who would hasten their chastisement that he did not know whether the chastisement they were promised on account of their disbelief and disobedience was near, or whether his Lord would delay what they were promised for a while. The knowledge of when the chastisement of the resurrection will take place is unknown except to Him, glory be to Him. He alone knows the timing of the Hour.

Yes, He alone is:

Knower of the unseen; He reveals not His unseen to anyone. (26)

عَٰلِمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبِ فَلَا يُظۡهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيۡبِهِۦٓ أَحَدًا ٢٦

He alone knows what is hidden from the senses. He discloses the unseen that He knows to none of His servants. Knowledge of the unseen is particularly His.

Save for whomsoever He is content with as a Messenger, then He dispatches a watcher before him and after him. (27)

إِلَّا مَنِ ٱرۡتَضَىٰ مِن رَّسُولٖ فَإِنَّهُۥ يَسۡلُكُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِۦ رَصَدٗا ٢٧

Save for whomsoever He is content with as a Messenger ... It means that the exception is a Messenger whom He selects to inform about the unseen. Or the meaning is that the exception is for a message from among the Messengers.

Allah the Most High discloses something of the unseen, in accordance to His wisdom and what is beneficial, and the Prophet informs the Imam or the rest of the people as far as he is allowed to.

... then He dispatches a watcher ... When Allah, glory be to Him, has informed him of the unseen He surrounds him with a number of guarding angels who observe him in his conveying of it, even though he himself is reliable and trustworthy, and Allah is aware of all he says and does. It is a matter of the

Divine etiquette, just as He assigns observing angels to each of His creatures though He is Himself aware of all they say and do.

... before him and after him. Allah, glory be to Him, dispatches, or sends forth, before the Messenger and behind him, observers from among the angels to observe what he does, as a protocol of the unseen and of the revelation that He has taught to His Messenger, . . .

That He may know they have conveyed the messages of their Lord, while He encompasses all that is in their presence, and He counts all things by number. (28)

لِّيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا۟ رِسَـٰلَـٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ عَدَدًۢا ﴿٢٨﴾

That He may know ... it means for Allah to confirm that His knowledge is implemented in the manifest world. To make His knowledge known in the sense that all will occur in the manifest world according to His knowledge . . . like His word, *'That We might know those amongst you who strive their utmost...'* [47: 31]. [*That He may know* is a figure of speech, as used by man to confirm something, and it does not mean that He lacks any knowledge – seen or unseen – in any sense, as reiterated in the remainder of the verse.]

... they have conveyed the messages of their Lord ... That is, for Him to know that His Messengers, whom He has informed with the knowledge of the unseen, have delivered the 'messages' *(risālāt)* of their Lord. Everything that is revealed to a Prophet is a 'message' *(risālah),* while the 'messages' *(risālāt)* are the sum of the revelation. This is not because Allah would otherwise not know, but as a matter of protocol, as has been mentioned, because:

The knowledge of everything and every event is with the Almighty, but hidden from others including the angels. However, when a certain event takes place, then that event is reported or 'documented', say by the angels.

... while He encompasses all that is in their presence, ... The knowledge of Allah, glory be to Him, encompasses all that the Messengers do in delivering the message.

... and He counts all things by number. That is, He counts everything with precision, and knows the numbers of all things. So His encompassing what is with the Messengers is an instance of His counting the numbers of all things: all creatures and all their deeds and all their circumstances and conditions.

Surah al-Muzzammil (73)
'The Enwrapped'

سورة المزمل

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-muzzammil*, meaning one who has enwrapped himself. Like the other Madinan surahs it is concerned with the Islamic social order and the beliefs. It is said that it was partly revealed at Makkah and partly at Madinah. While Surah al-Jinn concluded on the theme of the Messengers, this surah opens by mentioning the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family*.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We begin this surah by the name of Allah – as if clothed in this noble name – for in the hand of Him whom the name denotes is all of existence.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on all things in creating them and raising them, for all things to reach the height of their relative perfection, and who bestows mercy in the hereafter upon His servants the believers with rewards and bounty.

O thou the enwrapped, (1)

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُزَّمِّلُ ﴿١﴾

'The enwrapped' is given for *al-muzzammil*, meaning one who has wrapped himself in a robe or suchlike. The address is to the Messenger, for he would wrap himself in his cloak and sleep. It seems he is addressed as such in consideration of the relation between that his condition and the following directive of "standing the night", i.e. keeping vigil during the night.

Stand the night, except a little, (2)

قُمِ ٱلَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢﴾

The Messenger was to keep vigil during the night to perform the night-prayer, supplication, reflection and other acts of worship . . . except a little of it in which was permitted to sleep.

Then He, glory be to Him, clarifies the little in which the Messenger is permitted to sleep, with His word.

Half of it, or lessen from it a little, (3)

نِّصْفَهُۥٓ أَوِ ٱنقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلاً ﴿٣﴾

That is, he was permitted to sleep half the night; or was to lessen from the half and add to his period of vigil, so that he would sleep for less than half the night.

Or add to it; and chant the Qur’an, chanting. (4)

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ تَرْتِيلاً ﴿٤﴾

Or add to it; ... That is, he was permitted to add to the half in which he slept, so that he could sleep more than half the night. The sum of this is that he was to be wakeful for half the night, more or less, but about half the night.

... and chant the Qur’an, chanting. ‘Chant’ is given for *rattil*, meaning to recite at a moderate pace, neither hastily nor too slow. The repetition is for emphasis.

Imam Ali, *peace be upon him*, was asked about this āyah, and he said: ‘Clarify it clearly, sing it not like a poem [i.e. do not recite it speedily like you would a poem], and do not recite it in fragments [that is, do not recite it in a disjointed fashion], but (recite it in such a way so as to) terrify your hard hearts, and let not the purpose of any of you be to finish the surah.

Indeed We shall cast unto thee a heavy word; (5)

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِى عَلَيْكَ قَوْلاً ثَقِيلاً ﴿٥﴾

It means that a heavy word was to be revealed or inspired to the Messenger a word difficult to implement. What is meant is the Qur’an, for to act according to the Qur’an is heavy on a person; or it means the Messengership, for that was a heavy task. Or what is meant is standing the night, as is explained in His word:

Indeed the rising of the night, it is more severe in tread and sturdier in word. (6)

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ ٱلَّيْلِ هِىَ أَشَدُّ وَطْـًٔا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً ﴿٦﴾

Indeed the rising of the night ... ‘Rising’ is given for *nāshi’ah* which here means the hours of the night that rise one upon the other. What is meant are the actions of the night, or worship that is performed in the night.

... it is more severe in tread ... 'More severe in tread' means heavier and more difficult – due to the cold in winter, and the shortness of the night in summer. It may mean that the works of the night are harder than those of the day.

... and sturdier in word. Speech and worship during the night are more constructive, and more effective for the night brings an increase in presence of heart and mental concentration. And the best of deeds is the most difficult.

Indeed in the day thou have a lengthy turning. (7)

إِنَّ لَكَ فِى ٱلنَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلاً ﴿٧﴾

'Turning' is put for *sabḥ*, meaning to revolve, and thus one who swims or revolves in water is called *sābiḥ,* or swimmer. The meaning is that during the day the Messenger had many things to turn to, such as indicating the path and delivering the guidance, and so he could not worship fully. Thus the night was appointed for him to worship.

It is narrated that Imam Ali, would work throughout the day, and would worship throughout the night. When he was asked whether he ever rested, he replied, 'if I rested during the day it would mean ruin for the nation, and if I rested during the night it would mean ruin for myself.'

And recall the name of thy Lord, and exclude thyself to Him, totally: (8)

وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلاً ﴿٨﴾

The Messenger is commanded to remember the name of the Lord, by worshipping Him and humbling himself before Him. 'Exclude thyself' is put for *tabattal*, from *al-tabattul*, meaning to cut oneself from all other things and devote oneself to Allah, the Grand and Magnificent, and to worship Him with total devotion and exclusivity. 'To Him' is the meaning of the Arabic *ilayhi* signifying that the Messenger was to exclude all other things from himself for His sake, not to cut himself off from Him, glory be to Him. The words 'thy Lord' are then enlarged upon in His word:

Lord of the east and the west, there is no god but Him, so take Him as a trustee. (9)

رَّبُّ ٱلْمَشْرِقِ وَٱلْمَغْرِبِ لَآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَٱتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلاً ﴿٩﴾

Lord of the east and the west, ... 'The east and the west' is a term used to denote the whole of existence, for whoever has the east and the west in his hand has existence in its entirety.

... there is no god but Him, He has no partners in Godhead, as the polytheists supposed, and so there is no justice in worshipping any but Him.

... so take Him as a trustee. The Messenger was to take Him as his 'trustee' *(wakīl)*, as a protector to protect his undertaking, and was to entrust the success of his undertaking to Him.

وَٱصۡبِرۡ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَٱهۡجُرۡهُمۡ هَجۡرٗا جَمِيلٗا ١٠

And be restrained at what they say, and forgo them with a graceful forgoing. (10)

And Be restrained ... 'Be restrained' is given for *usbur*, meaning 'bear patiently'. He was to bear patiently, on the path of his monotheism and his denouncing the idols,

... at what they say ... He was not to let what the disbelievers around him were saying, that he was a witch, a soothsayer, or mad and suchlike, put him off.

... and forgo them with a graceful forgoing ... He was to distance himself from them in a beautiful way; that is, by calling them to the guidance with wisdom and kind admonitions and with arguments that are best, all the while distancing himself from them.

وَذَرۡنِي وَٱلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ أُوْلِي ٱلنَّعۡمَةِ وَمَهِّلۡهُمۡ قَلِيلًا ١١

And leave Me with the beliers, those with blessings; and respite them a little. (11)

And leave Me with the beliers ... That is, he was to leave them to Allah, and know that He, glory be to Him, was to suffice him against their evil. 'The beliers, *al-mukadhdhibīn*, were those who called his messengership and what he brought a lie.

... those with blessings ... They were possessors of blessings in that they owned wealth and the other forms of bounty.

... and respite them a little. He was to respite them, for soon their requital was with Him, glory be to Him. In the world they were soon to be overtaken by the chastisement: at the battle of Badr, and then in the hereafter. The phrase 'Respite them a little' is in reference to bearing with them patience, and constitutes a warning to the disbelievers.

Indeed with Us are fetters and a raging fire, (12)

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَآ أَنكَالاً وَجَحِيمًا ﴿١٢﴾

The meaning is in the hereafter. 'with Us' means with Our reckoning and requital. 'Raging fire', *jaḥīm*, is one of the names of hell.

And food that chokes, and a painful chastisement. (13)

وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣﴾

'chokes' is put for *dhā ghussah*, meaning food that sticks in the throat and cannot be swallowed. The provision of hell that is prepared for them has the quality of sticking in the throat and choking them, so that the guilty will not be able to swallow it except after great difficulty and exertion.

These characteristics of the chastisement will surely take place on:

The day the earth and the mountains tremble, and the mountains will be a sliding sand-hill. (14)

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ ٱلْأَرْضُ وَٱلْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ ٱلْجِبَالُ
كَثِيبًا مَّهِيلاً ﴿١٤﴾

The day the earth and the mountains tremble, ... The earth will quake and be convulsed. This is amongst the āyāt or signs of the resurrection, as He says, *'Indeed the earthquake of the Hour is a mighty thing.'* [22: 2] The mountains will also tremble, so as to increase the terror.

... and the mountains will be a sliding sand-hill. And the mountains that day will be as heaps of sand *(kathīb)*, sliding *(mahīn)* about the earth.

Indeed We have sent a Messenger unto ye – a witness over ye – just as We sent unto Pharaoh a Messenger. (15)

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولاً شَٰهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَآ
أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولاً ﴿١٥﴾

The address is to the disbelievers. The Messenger was Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*. He was a witness of what they believed and performed, worthy and corrupt. The Messenger sent to the Pharaoh was Moses.

But Pharaoh disobeyed the Messenger, and so We took him, a terrible taking. (16)

فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَأَخَذْنَٰهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيلاً
﴿١٦﴾

The Pharaoh refused to obey his commands; rather he opposed him and became a stubborn enemy. So Allah took the Pharaoh, with a terrible taking – drowning him in the sea. The implication was that the same would happen to them: if they disbelieved they would be taken with any one of a range of chastisements.

So how will ye be guardful, if ye disbelieve, of the day that puts children grey? (17)

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِن كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ ٱلْوِلْدَٰنَ شِيبًا ﴿١٧﴾

The question is addressed to the disbelievers. How will they guard against that day, the chastisement of that day, that makes the children old and grey? The day of resurrection and its terrors are such that it will render young lads as old men, sending their hair white and so forth. The meaning is: Are you able to protect yourself against the chastisement of the day of resurrection? And since you are not able, how is it that you disbelieve and render yourselves deserving of it?

The sky will be burst open by it; His promise will be done. (18)

ٱلسَّمَآءُ مُنفَطِرٌۢ بِهِۦ ۚ كَانَ وَعْدُهُۥ مَفْعُولًا ﴿١٨﴾

The sky will be burst open by it; ... The terror of that day will be such as to cause the sky itself to split, so that the sky will appear like something torn apart, as a result of the breakdown of the celestial order.

... His promise will be done. His promise, glory be to Him, can only be done *(maf‘ūl),* fulfilled, carried out, with no discrepancy and no alteration, but exactly as He, glory be to Him, wills it.

Indeed this is a reminder, so he who wills shall take unto his Lord a path. (19)

إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۖ فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٩﴾

Indeed this is a reminder ... The description of the things described in order to produce fear of that day is a reminder and an exhortation for mankind.

... so he who wills shall take unto his Lord a path. So he who wills shall take unto his Lord a path *(sabīl),* meaning that he shall journey the path that leads to His satisfaction and contentment, which is the path of Islam.

The current then returns to the night-prayer, with which the discourse began, as He says:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعۡلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدۡنَىٰ مِن ثُلُثَيِ ٱلَّيۡلِ
وَنِصۡفَهُۥ وَثُلُثَهُۥ وَطَآئِفَةٞ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ مَعَكَۚ وَٱللَّهُ
يُقَدِّرُ ٱلَّيۡلَ وَٱلنَّهَارَۚ عَلِمَ أَن لَّن تُحۡصُوهُ فَتَابَ
عَلَيۡكُمۡۖ فَٱقۡرَءُواْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانِۚ عَلِمَ أَن
سَيَكُونُ مِنكُم مَّرۡضَىٰ وَءَاخَرُونَ يَضۡرِبُونَ فِي
ٱلۡأَرۡضِ يَبۡتَغُونَ مِن فَضۡلِ ٱللَّهِ وَءَاخَرُونَ
يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۖ فَٱقۡرَءُواْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنۡهُۚ
وَأَقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَقۡرِضُواْ ٱللَّهَ
قَرۡضًا حَسَنٗاۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُواْ لِأَنفُسِكُم مِّنۡ خَيۡرٖ
تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ هُوَ خَيۡرٗا وَأَعۡظَمَ أَجۡرٗاۚ
وَٱسۡتَغۡفِرُواْ ٱللَّهَۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمُۢ ٢٠

Indeed thy Lord knows that thou stand close on two-thirds of the night, a half of it, and a third of it; and a party of those with thee. And Allah determines the night and the day. He knows that ye will never count it, so He has relented toward ye; so recite such of the recitation ye find easy.

He knows that there will be among ye one ill, while others strike out in the land reaching for the profusion of Allah, and others battle in Allah's path. So recite that of it ye find easy; and establish the prayer, and pay the zakat, and lend to Allah a beautiful loan.

And what good ye send on for yourselves – ye will find it with Allah; it is better and greater in wage; and seek Allah's forgiveness indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful. (20)

Indeed thy Lord ... The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger of Allah, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

... knows that thou stand close on two-thirds of the night, a half of it, and a third of it; ... 'Under' *(adnā),* here, means almost. Some nights the Messenger would rise before two-thirds of the night, so that there would remain two-thirds before the dawn. Other nights he would rise before a half, and other nights he would rise before a third,

... and a party of those with thee ... from amongst the believers such as Imam Ali, and the Lady Fāṭimah, *peace be upon them*, and other select ones.

... And Allah determines the night and the day ... The length of the night and the day is in His hand, subject to His determination. Therefore He knows all about what it is that He has determined.

... He knows that ye will never count it ... He knows that we cannot spend the whole night in worship and devotion.

... so He has relented toward ye; ... He has turned to us all [the pronoun is plural] in grace, and has not made it an obligation to stand the whole night, even though the conditions exist to make it obligatory.

... so recite such of the recitation ye find easy ... We are therefore to recite, during the night, what is easy of 'the recitation' *(al-qur'ān),* in the general sense of that which is recited meaning the prayer, supplications and Qur'an recitation. What is meant is that since you are unable to be 'reciting' the whole night, spend as much of the night reciting (i.e. worship, prayers, and supplication) as is easy for you.

The reasoning behind this lenience is then explained:

... He knows that there will be among ye one ill, ... Allah knows that some of you will be ill; for those who are ill are unable to stand during the night for prayer.

... while others strike out in the land ... journeying through the land,

reaching for the profusion of Allah, ... seeking the bounty of Allah through trade.

... and others battle in Allah's path ... And others fight in the way of Allah to elevate His word and the way of His religion. The traveller and the warrior both endure hardships during the day and it is not easy for them to stand the night – therefore Allah has lessened it for them, and not commanded them to stand, or at least not for a particular portion, such as a half or a third or two-thirds.

... So recite that of it ye find easy; ... So we are to recite of it – of the recitation, meaning the prayer, supplication and the Sacred Qur'an – that which is easy for us. Those categories require a general reduction, in accordance to wisdom.

... and establish the prayer, ... And establish the prayer: at its times, as commanded by Allah, glory be to Him.

... and pay the zakāt, ... And pay the poor-due (*zakāt*): both that which is obligatory, and what is desirable.

... and lend to Allah a beautiful loan ... And lend to Allah a goodly loan: by spending your wealth to gain His pleasure, without making anyone beholden, or doing it for show, or for reputation, or being conceited about it. This is termed 'a loan' because Allah, glory be to Him, returns it to man in the world and the hereafter, many times multiplied.

... And what good ye send on for yourselves ... It means send on to the hereafter. For when man does good *(khayr)* – meaning obedience and devotion – that good precedes him to the Garden, in that when he arrives there he finds there the rewards for what he has done.– ***ye will find it with Allah; ...*** We will find that good deed 'with' *(ʿind)* Allah:, meaning in the domain of His grace. That you will find: you will find the exact same thing, with no diminishment and no variance.

... it is better ... There it will be 'better' *(khayr)*, in that that same good will be better, or itself good.

... and greater in wage; ... The reward will be greater than what it was itself; its reward in the hereafter is greater than what it was in the world. If in the world it equalled ten, let us suppose, then in the hereafter we will find that it will equal a hundred. Or it means greater in reward than what would remain in the world.

... and seek Allah's forgiveness; indeed Allah is forgiving, merciful. Allah is forgiving: of the sins, and He bestows mercy and compassion over and above the forgiving of sins.

Surah al-Muddaththir (74)
'The Encloaked'

سورة المدثر

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-muddaththir,* meaning one who has covered himself with a cloak or blanket around his clothing. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the principles of belief. Whereas Surah al-Muzzammil concluded on the theme of the prayer, the reciting and the other forms of goodness, this surah opens by mentioning its other forms – carrying out the conveyance of the message, magnifying Allah, and cleansing.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

We seek help by the name of Allah, that it be an aid for us in our affairs.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. Him who bestows mercy and profusion upon His creatures.

O thou the encloaked, (1)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡمُدَّثِّرُ ﴿١﴾

The address is to the Messenger of Allah, *may Allah bless him and his family*. 'The encloaked' is given for *al-muddaṯhthir,* from *iddaththar*, itself from *tadaththur*. It means one who cloaks himself in a *dithār* – an outer garment worn for warmth over the clothes that are in touch with his body. Thus clothing called *dithār* is in contra-distinction to the clothing called *shiᶜār,* which is the clothing next to the body and called by that name because they are next to the hair *(shaᶜar)* of the body.

It is narrated that the Messenger, at the time of his receiving the revelation was overcome by trembling due to the awe of the situation. He therefore said to his beloved wife Khadījah, *peace be upon her*, 'Cover me!' and she covered him. And so the call came: 'O thou the encloaked!'

Stand! And warn! (2)

قُمۡ فَأَنذِرۡ ﴿٢﴾

The Messenger was to rise up from his resting; and warn the people of the punishment if they were to continue in their disbelief and disobedience.

And thy Lord, so magnify. (3) وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ ﴿٣﴾

The Messenger, was to magnify *(kabbir)* Allah, glory be to Him, and declare His magnificence, alone, without the idols.

And thy clothes, so cleanse. (4) وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ﴿٤﴾

The Muslim must cleanse his heart of the filth of polytheism by magnifying Allah, glory be to Him, and must cleanse his clothes from getting dirty by shortening their lengths, so they are not made dirty, and by washing them of the unclean things *(najāsāt).* And it has been narrated that the meaning of the āyah is to cleanse of the unclean things and to cleanse by cutting short. This is because the meaning is general to them both. In a tradition we are told, *'Let your clothes not be too long; that is more guardful, more pure, and longer lasting.'*

And the contamination, so shun. (5) وَٱلرُّجْزَ فَٱهْجُرْ ﴿٥﴾

And the contamination ... 'Contamination' *(rujz)* here means all kinds of unclean things: idols, material forms of filth and vices.

... so shun. It means to be distant from them.

And make not beholden, that thou gain increase. (6) وَلَا تَمْنُن تَسْتَكْثِرُ ﴿٦﴾

And make not beholden ... 'Make not beholden' *(lā tamnun)* applies to acts of bestowal. It means giving without expectation, and without doing or saying anything to make the recipient of your good deed feel beholden. We are not to give seeking thereby an increase, or a reward in return, but we must do so purely for the sake of Almighty God, as narrated from Imam Bāqir peace be upon him. It could also mean, 'not imposing a feeling of being beholden on people when giving to them, for whatever is given sincerely for the sake of Allah will result in increase'. Or the meaning may be that we should not consider whatever we have given as great.

And for thy Lord, persevere. (7) وَلِرَبِّكَ فَٱصْبِرْ ﴿٧﴾

The Messenger was to persevere for the sake of Allah, glory be to Him, in the face of the persecution of the disbelievers and polytheists, and not be put off by them.

For their day is coming, the day when revenge will be taken from them:

For when the trumpet is blown, (8)

فَإِذَا نُقِرَ فِي ٱلنَّاقُورِ ﴿٨﴾

This is in reference to the second blowing of the trumpet, by the angel Isrāfil, when the dead are resurrected as a result.

That day, is a day of hardship; (9)

فَذَٰلِكَ يَوۡمَئِذٖ يَوۡمٌ عَسِيرٌ ﴿٩﴾

For the day on which the trumpet is sounded will be a day of extreme difficulty.

Upon the disbelievers, not easy. (10)

عَلَى ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ غَيۡرُ يَسِيرٖ ﴿١٠﴾

That day will not be easy for those who disbelieve in Allah, His Prophet and what he came with from Him, for they will be chastised that day. This emphasizes the previous āyah, and informs us that the difficulty that day is only for the disbelievers, not for the righteous believers.

Leave Me with him I created alone, (11)

ذَرۡنِي وَمَنۡ خَلَقۡتُ وَحِيدٗا ﴿١١﴾

The Messenger was to leave Allah to deal with the man whom He created alone, on his own with no wealth or sons. It means that He was promising, glory be to Him, to be a sufficiency for the messenger against that man’s evil, and to take revenge from the man for his belying the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family.*

And I put for him extensive wealth (12)

وَجَعَلۡتُ لَهُۥ مَالٗا مَّمۡدُودٗا ﴿١٢﴾

That is, He created him such that he had nothing, and then gave him extensive wealth and sons. The man about whom the āyah came down was Walīd ibn Mughayrah, who was extremely wealthy.

And sons, present; (13)

وَبَنِينَ شُهُودٗا ﴿١٣﴾

Walīd had been granted sons and they were present, for it is a blessing itself that a man's sons are with him and not absent and away somewhere.

And I facilitated for him, total facilitation: (14) وَمَهَّدتُّ لَهُۥ تَمۡهِيدٗا ﴿١٤﴾

That is, He made things smooth for him, so that he became important in his tribe, well-situated in the land, and generally well furnished and supplied.

Then he lusts that I increase! (15) ثُمَّ يَطۡمَعُ أَنۡ أَزِيدَ ﴿١٥﴾

That person could then only desire more wealth and sons.

Nay, he was towards Our portents obstinate. (16) كَلَّآۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ لِأٓيَٰتِنَا عَنِيدٗا ﴿١٦﴾

Nay, ... It means that nothing more was to be granted him after that.

... he was towards Our portents ... He had denied Allah, and had given the place of gratitude to ingratitude.

... obstinate. It is given for ᶜ*anīd*. Stubbornly, fanatically, he denied the truth of the arguments and presentations. He denied them and disbelieved out of his obstinacy.

I shall overtake him with an ascending. (17) سَأُرۡهِقُهُۥ صَعُودًا ﴿١٧﴾

That is, Allah was to appoint for him the most difficult aspects of the chastisement, which he would be unable to bear. For whoever is assigned to the 'ascending' finds the going very difficult.

It is narrated with regard to the circumstances of the descent of these and the subsequent āyāt that, in the words of al-Qummi, they were about al-Walīd ibn Mughayrah, a tribal chief and a man of intelligence and cunning. He was among those who used to mock the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger used to sit within the compound of "Ismaᶜil's Ḥijr" (Ishmael's tomb) – which is by the Kaᶜbah – in the Sacred Mosque, reciting the Qur'an. The assembled dignitaries gathered around al-Walīd ibn Mughayrah, and said, 'O Aba ᶜAbd Shams [al-Walīd's *kunyah* or agnomen], what is it Muhammad is saying? Is it poetry, is it sorcery, or is it prose?'

Al-Walīd said, 'Let me listen to his word.' Then he went to the Messenger and sat with him, and said, 'O Muhammad, recite to me some of your poetry.'

He said, 'It is not poetry, but the word of Allah bestowed on His angels, His Messengers and His Prophets.'

So he said: 'Chant some of it to me.' The Messenger of God recited the surah of Sajdah (or Prostration #32); when he came to the line *{... if they turn away, then say, 'Indeed I warn ye of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt of ᶜĀd and Thamūd.'}* At this al-Walīd was overtaken by a shivering, and the hairs on his head and of his beard stood on end. He went to his house and did not return to the Quraysh that day.

The group went to Abu Jahl, another chief of Quraysh and a fierce opponent of the prophet, who was the prophet's uncle too. They told him that al-Walīd had turned to the religion of Muhammad, for he had left without joining them. Next morning, Abu Jahl went to al-Walīd and asked him: 'O uncle, have you made our heads bow (in shame) and disgraced us? Is it that you take pleasure in our misery and have joined the religion of Muhammad?'

He said, 'I have not joined his religion, but I heard from him some words that make the skin crawl.'

Abu Jahl asked him, 'Is it prose?'

He said, 'No, prose is uninterrupted speech but this speech is rhythmic and not all of a piece.'

'So is it poetry?' Abu Jahl asked him.

'No,' he replied, 'for I have heard all the different types of the poetry of the Arabs, and this is not poetry.'

'So what is it?' he asked.

Al-Walīd said, 'Leave me to think about it.'

The next day they asked him what he had to say about what they were saying. He said, 'Say that it is sorcery, for it takes away a person's heart.'

Then Allah sent down about this the āyah, *'So leave Me with him I created alone.'* al-Walīd is referred to as 'alone' because he used to boast to the nobles that he alone provided the cover for the Kaᶜbah in alternate years, while the entire Quraysh provided the cover in the other years. He had much wealth and

orchards, and had ten sons in Makkah. He also had ten slaves each equipped with a thousand dinārs with which to engage in trade on his behalf.

Indeed he thought and determined; (18) إِنَّهُۥ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, al-Walīd deliberated about the Qur'an and decided.

So slain be he, how he determined! (19) فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ ﴿١٩﴾

An invocation against him, meaning: may Allah slay him! His decision accorded to the base desires of the disbelievers and the general superstition, for the people were quick to attribute sorcery to anything out of the ordinary. The tone is one of indignation at his deliberation and decision.

Thereupon, slain be he, how he determined! (20) ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ ﴿٢٠﴾

The repetition denotes the severity of the indignation.

Then he speculated, (21) ثُمَّ نَظَرَ ﴿٢١﴾

He regarded the question of how to belittle the Qur'an. Regarded *(nadhara)* here means pondered.

Then he frowned and scowled, (22) ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ ﴿٢٢﴾

His face showed these expressions of displeasure and disgust.

Then he turned around and was haughty, (23) ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ وَٱسْتَكْبَرَ ﴿٢٣﴾

He turned away from the truth, his pride denying him from speaking the truth.

And he said, 'This is nothing but transmitted sorcery; (24) فَقَالَ إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْثَرُ ﴿٢٤﴾

That is, the Qur'an is nothing but sorcery passed on from a witch or a sorcerer.

'This is nothing but the word of the mortals.' (25) إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا قَوْلُ ٱلْبَشَرِ ﴿٢٥﴾

That is, he said that the Qur’an was nothing more than human speech, and was not inspiration or revelation from on high.

The current then turns to warn him about the lying claims he invented. For were it sorcery, sorcerers would have been able to produce its like, and the legislators of the world would have been able to legislate and devise laws similar to it. But it is the word of Allah, and they knew that, but they were prevented from admitting it by their pride and insolence.

I shall enter him in Saqar! (26) سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ ﴿٢٦﴾

That is, he shall be thrust into hell, to remain there.

And what shall make thee comprehend what is Saqar? (27) وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا سَقَرُ ﴿٢٧﴾

The address, in the singular, is to the listener. The meaning is that you cannot understand the ferocity of the chastisement, for it is impossible for man to know what it is really like.

It neither lets survive nor leaves alone; (28) لَا تُبْقِى وَلَا تَذَرُ ﴿٢٨﴾

It neither lets survive ... The fire respites nothing that is thrown into it; it consumes flesh, skin and bone.

... nor leaves alone; This is either a repetition for emphasis, or it means that it does not let them die and in that way escape from the chastisement.

Scorching the skins. (29) لَوَّاحَةٌ لِّلْبَشَرِ ﴿٢٩﴾

‘Scorching’ is given for *lawwāḥah*, from *talwih*, meaning to change the colour of, as an effect of the sun and suchlike. ‘Skins’ is given for *bashar*, plural of *bashrah,* meaning the surface of the skin.

Over it are nineteen. (30) عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ ﴿٣٠﴾

That is, the angels assigned to hell are nineteen. There is nothing impossible about this number, and there is no reason to ask why they are neither more nor less; for whatever their number the same questions could be asked. The same

applies to other given numbers, such as the *'eight doors of paradise'*, the *'seven doors to hell'*, the *'seven skies in levels'*, and so on.

And We have put not companions for the fire save angels, and We put not their number save as a trial for those who disbelieve,

So that those given the Book become certain, and for the believers to increase in belief, and that those given the Book and the believers vacillate not,

And that those in whose hearts is a disease and the disbelievers may say, 'What is it that Allah means by this metaphor?' Thus does Allah lead astray whom He wills, and He guides whom He wills; and none knows the armies of thy Lord except Him;

And this is nothing but a reminder to mankind. (31)

وَمَا جَعَلْنَآ أَصْحَٰبَ ٱلنَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَٰٓئِكَةً ۙ وَمَا
جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لِيَسْتَيْقِنَ
ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَيَزْدَادَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِيمَٰنًا
ۙ وَلَا يَرْتَابَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۙ
وَلِيَقُولَ ٱلَّذِينَ فِى قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ وَٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ
مَاذَآ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا مَثَلًا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ ٱللَّهُ مَن
يَشَآءُ وَيَهْدِى مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ
إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَمَا هِىَ إِلَّا ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْبَشَرِ ﴿٣١﴾

And We have put not companions for the fire save angels, ... Only angels are deputed to guard over hell as they are stronger, and have no connections to the people in the fire, as people would have.

... and We put not their number save as a trial for those who disbelieve, ... Their number – nineteen – has been set simply as a test for the disbelievers, so as to clarify whether they believe in it or whether they laugh at this number, saying that it is far too small a number to chastise the vast numbers of disbelievers and disobedient. For His creations, glory be to Him, are to be tested, whether with plenty or with affliction in the world or the hereafter, whether by a thing itself or by its characteristics or by its status.

... So that those given the Book become certain ... The number of angels is mentioned in the Qur'an so that those given the Book, that is the Jews and Christians, may be certain that the Messenger is true; that they experience him informing them of those parts of their scriptures that they keep secret to

themselves, and do not teach to anyone. For when a person informs them of what is in their books though he has not studied them and not been taught by them, of necessity they identify him as being true and as having learned of such matters through inspiration.

... and for the believers to increase in belief, ... And so that those who believe in the Messenger are increased in their faith, in that they see the people of the Book (the learned amongst them) confirming the truth of the Messenger. This naturally increases faith.

... and that those given the Book and the believers vacillate not, ... That is, so that those given the Book and the believers do not doubt about the Messenger. This emphasizes the former āyah. The Book-folk who believed in their hearts, and the others who believed openly in the Messenger, were subject to doubt, as is normal with every inner quality. So when they saw this confirmation their faith strengthened, and they were no more subject to doubt.

Thus the purpose of letting the number of the guardians of hell be known is two-fold. First, for the faith of the believers to be increased, and for the Book-folk to learn that the Messenger was true. Second, that the hypocrisy of the hypocrite and the disbelief of the disbelief be intensified.

... And that those in whose hearts is a disease and the disbelievers may say, 'What is it that Allah means by this metaphor?' ... Those in whose hearts is a disease, meaning the hypocrites, and the disbelievers in the Messenger, would say, 'What does Allah mean by this metaphor?' As if they considered this particular number to be a metaphor or similitude, rather than the clear truth in accordance to the actual number of the fire's guardians. And so they sought clarification; for the position of the stubborn opponent is that he only seeks clarification of a word when he wishes to overcome that word, for the contorted condition of his heart leads him to see all things as equal.

The thread then turns to answer their question:

... Thus does Allah lead astray whom He wills, ... That is, by clarifying the realities, like the clarification of the number of hell's guardians, Allah sends astray whom He wills: for whenever the truth is brought up some of the people dislike it, and so it sends them astray.

... and He guides whom He wills; ... Others hold on to faith and it becomes a guidance for them. For guiding and leading astray are not matters of

compulsion, but mean that sending down a āyah or explaining an ordinance causes people either to be guided or to go astray, it being a test for them.

In keeping with the exposition of the number of His troops assigned to guard over hell, the flow now turns to explain the general truth of this:

... and none knows the armies of thy Lord except Him; ... for none knows the troops of your Lord but Him, glory be to Him. That is, the numbers of His angels deputed to oversee creation is known to Him alone, glory be to Him; save as far as He teaches such matters to some of His servants. And so none can say that the troops of a particular affair are more or less than He has informed us.

... And this is nothing but a reminder to mankind. The mention of the hell *(Saqar)* is nothing but a reminder to mankind. It means that it is mentioned to remind them of the chastisement, so that they may tear themselves from disobedience. Or it may mean that this surah is a reminder for them.

Nay, by the moon, (32)

كَلَّا وَٱلۡقَمَرِ ٣٢

Nay, ... That is, the affair is not as those disbelievers imagine it to be, in that there is no account and no requital.

... by the moon; That is, an oath sworn, by the moon.

And the night when it turns around, (33)

وَٱلَّيۡلِ إِذۡ أَدۡبَرَ ٣٣

And the oath is by the night, and its passing on and giving way to the day.

And the morning when it shines, (34)

وَٱلصُّبۡحِ إِذَآ أَسۡفَرَ ٣٤

The oath is by the morning when it arrives and spreads its brightness.

Indeed it is one of the grand. (35)

إِنَّهَا لَإِحۡدَى ٱلۡكُبَرِ ٣٥

That is, the *Saqar*, the subject of the discourse, is one of the Grand portents or signs. He who can create such signs as the moon, the night and the morning, is clearly able to create the fire and hell to chastise thereby the disbelievers and the non-believers. Perhaps the selection of these things for swearing the oath is meant to suggest that it is like the darkness that is dissipated by any form of light. In the same way, the stagnancy of these things suggests the stagnancy of

the people of the fire, who will be as if dead, so dread will be their lives, in contrast to the believers who will be joyfully alive.

A warning to mankind, (36)

نَذِيرًا لِّلْبَشَرِ ﴿٣٦﴾

That is, while hell is a grand sign, it is also a warning for mankind, warning them that if they do not believe they will be afflicted with it.

For whosoever wills among ye to step forward or lag behind. (37)

لِمَن شَآءَ مِنكُمْ أَن يَتَقَدَّمَ أَوْ يَتَأَخَّرَ ﴿٣٧﴾

That is, for whoever of you, O mankind, who wishes to go forward to goodness and be saved, or to lag behind in disobedience and be punished. It is for each person to choose his path: either to paradise or to the fire.

Every soul for what it earns is held in pledge, (38)

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

The metaphor is of a security that is kept against a loan. If the loan is paid off, the security is released, otherwise not. And so it is with everyone who honours what is expected from them – belief and obedience – they will be freed and rewarded. Otherwise their destination is the fire and perpetual imprisonment.

Save for the companions of the right hand: (39)

إِلَّآ أَصْحَٰبَ ٱلْيَمِينِ ﴿٣٩﴾

These will be given their books in their right hands, and they will be led by the right, on the day of resurrection, to the Gardens. They will have freed themselves from their pledge by their virtuous deeds.

In gardens, enquiring (40)

فِى جَنَّٰتٍ يَتَسَآءَلُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, they will be asking each other, or they will ask the angels, or they will ask the offenders themselves . . .

About the offenders: (41)

عَنِ ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

In accordance to the first two possibilities, they turn to the sinners after the questioning – as given in 37:50 – and in the third possibility, which is the likely option, it is the sinner who initially is asked. 37: 50-56 state:

Then they will turn to one another and question one another. One of them says: "I had an intimate companion (on the earth), who used to say, "art thou amongst those who bear witness to the truth (of the Message)? When we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed receive rewards and punishments?""" He then says: "Would ye like to look for (him)?" Then he looked down and saw him in the midst of the Fire. He said: "By Allah! thou wast little short of bringing me to perdition!"

'What has brought ye to the Saqar?' (42)

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرَ ﴿٤٢﴾

That is, they will ask the offenders what brought them into the terrible fire.

They say, 'We were not amongst the prayers, (43)

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

'The prayers' is given for *muṣallīn,* meaning people who pray. In reply the offenders will say that while they were in the world they did not perform the obligatory prayers.

'And we did not feed the destitute, (44)

وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

That is, they did not fulfil their obligations of feeding the poor, by paying the *zakāt* and suchlike.

'And we would plunge with the plungers, (45)

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

That is, they used to plunge into the falsehood with others who plunged into the false. 'Plunge' is given for *khawdh*, meaning to immerse one's whole body in something, as if the false *(bāṭil)* is something one immerses in.

'And we would belie the day of requital, (46)

وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤٦﴾

That is, they did not admit the day of resurrection, but said that it was a lie, and that it would not happen.

'Until the certainty came to us.' (47)

حَتَّىٰ أَتَانَا الْيَقِينُ ﴿٤٧﴾

That is, until death come to them, meaning that they did not repent before they died. Death is called 'the certainty' on account of how it causes that world to become apparent for man, so that he becomes certain it is there.

And since that is how they were in the world:

So the intercession of the intercessors will not profit them. (48)

فَمَا تَنفَعُهُمْ شَفَٰعَةُ ٱلشَّٰفِعِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

That is, the Messengers, the angels and the learned and suchlike who mediate or intercede on the sinners' behalf, will not be allowed to mediate for them, as these sinners are beyond the level of intercession. No mediation will profit them as none will mediate for them.

The thread then turns to express amazement at their headstrong clinging to the false:

What is it with them, that from the reminder they turn away? (49)

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ ٱلتَّذْكِرَةِ مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

What is with these disbelievers that they turn from the Qur’an that reminds them of the realities and bears so much of benefit to them? What good is there for them in their turning away?

As if they are startled asses (50)

كَأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنفِرَةٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

‘Startled’ is put for *mustanfirah* – it seems to denote that they seek flight from themselves, due to the fear they witness. The disbelievers' being likened to asses is on account of their lack of perception and their stupidity.

Fleeing from a lion. (51)

فَرَّتْ مِن قَسْوَرَةٍ ﴿٥١﴾

An ass will flee on witnessing a lion. In the same way the disbelievers flee from the Messenger.

Yet, every one of them wishes to be given open scripture. (52)

بَلْ يُرِيدُ كُلُّ ٱمْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ صُحُفًا مُّنَشَّرَةً ﴿٥٢﴾

That is, each wishes to receive inspiration and have a book sent down to him from Allah, glory be to Him. It is as He says, *'And they say, “Why does an angel not descend to us?"’* [11: 26]. Or the meaning is that despite all their turning from the truth, they wish to be given their book on the day of resurrection spread open and full of good deeds. The books which record the

evil deeds will be kept closed that day, so that others cannot read them, while books recording good deeds will be kept open as a mark of honour and pride.

'Yet' is given for *bal*, which signifies the absurdity of their expectation in consideration of their disbelief.

Nay, but they do not fear the hereafter. (53)

كَلَّاۖ بَل لَّا يَخَافُونَ ٱلۡأٓخِرَةَ ٥٣

Nay, they shall not be given an open book, for they did not do what would make them deserving of that. They did not believe in the hereafter, for them to enter the ranks of the believers and thus be granted an open book in their hands.

Perhaps what is meant is that since they did not believe in the hereafter, they turned away from the reminder:

Nay, indeed it is a reminder; (54)

كَلَّآ إِنَّهُۥ تَذۡكِرَةٞ ٥٤

Nay, ... The affair is not as they imagined; that to turn away would be better for them.

... indeed it is a reminder; The Qur'an reminds them.

So whoever wills recalls it. (55)

فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ ٥٥

He who wills to be reminded and guided to goodness shall be reminded and admonished by it (the Qur'an). He who does not wish to remember, that is up to him.

And they will not recall unless Allah wills, He is One to be feared, and One who forgives. (56)

وَمَا يَذۡكُرُونَ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُۚ هُوَ أَهۡلُ
ٱلتَّقۡوَىٰ وَأَهۡلُ ٱلۡمَغۡفِرَةِ ٥٦

And they will not recall unless Allah wills, ... Being reminded has two aspects: a. the will of Allah, glory be to Him, by His sending Prophets and guiding the people; and b. the acceptance of the person. So their being reminded depends on the will of Allah, and He certainly wills it, glory be to Him, for He has guided; and so it remains for them to accept the guidance.

... He is One to be feared, ... He is deserving of being feared; for man only fears one who is powerful and aware of any transgressions and will punish them, and all of this is true of Him, glory be to Him.

... and He is One who forgives. He forgives the sins of whoever fears Him and comes to the path. So fear Him, O people, and He will forgive ye.

Surah al-Qiyāmah (75)
‘The Resurrection’

سورة القيامة

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-qiyāmah*, meaning ‘the resurrection’. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the three principles of faith. As Surah al-*Muddaththir* concluded on matters relating to the resurrection, so this surah opens with the same.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, … Beginning by the name of Allah who is the true Deity. Other than Him there is no deity.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy and grace upon His creatures in the world and the hereafter.

I swear not by the day of resurrection. (1)

لَآ أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ ﴿١﴾

‘Not’ is put for *la*, a particle of negation *(nafy)*. It has been explained that in such cases it is used to convey a very subtle point: that the speaker wishes to explain and emphasise a matter without swearing, but in a way suggestive of an oath. Thus it might be said 'I swear not by your life, except that the matter is such and such...' when it is not intended to swear an oath, though hinting at an oath so as to affect emphasis.

And I swear not by the scolding soul. (2)

وَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِٱلنَّفْسِ ٱللَّوَّامَةِ ﴿٢﴾

‘The scolding soul’ is given for *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, which is the admonishing soul that scolds and censures its possessor for shortcomings in the service of Allah, glory be to Him, no matter how high one's level of obedience.

It is said that the reason for the negation of these oaths is that the disbelievers did not acknowledge these two matters. Accordingly, it is as if it is said, 'I do not swear by these two as you do not admit them.'

Does the human reckon that We will never gather his bones? (3)

أَيَحْسَبُ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ أَلَّن نَّجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُۥ ﴿٣﴾

Does man think that his bones will not be gathered after death, for him to be raised? That is, does he think there is no resurrection and no afterlife?

People sometimes claim that there is no such gathering, on account of their calculation that Allah has not the power to do this. Therefore the thread turns to reject this false claim, in His word:

Nay, We are able to restore his fingertips. (4)

بَلَىٰ قَـٰدِرِينَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن نُّسَوِّىَ بَنَانَهُۥ ﴿٤﴾

That is, nay, on the contrary, We shall gather his bones, for indeed We are able to reshape the tips of his fingers. This is a sign of the extent of His power, for the patterns on the fingertips of people are all different, no matter how many people there are. So, He who is able to make and restore the most precise element of the human being is clearly able to restore the other parts of his being.

It has been said that the most wondrous parts of the human being are four: the difference in voices; in faces; the fingerprints; and the individuality of handwriting, so that no two person's handwriting are the same, though the differences are only discernible with the help of a microscope and modern equipments.

Indeed man does not disbelieve in the return on account of him denying in his heart the power of Allah, glory be to Him, and His ability to raise us:

Nay, the human wishes to be brazen onwards. (5)

بَلْ يُرِيدُ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُۥ ﴿٥﴾

'Nay' is given for *bal*. It means that the human does not necessarily disbelieve the resurrection because he in his heart actually denies the ability of Allah to bring back the dead, but this is on account of his desire to be brazen and disobedient during the remainder of his life. Since to acknowledge the hereafter prevents a person from his brazenness, he denies it so as to keep open the path of his brazenness. And when a person warns him of the hereafter, he denies it so as to silence him.

He asks, 'When is the day of resurrection?' (6)

يَسْـَٔلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ ٱلْقِيَـٰمَةِ ﴿٦﴾

The denier asks when the resurrection will come, meaning that it will not come. Otherwise, when is it?

Here the thread turns to explain the timing of the day of resurrection:

Then when the sight flashes, (7)

فَإِذَا بَرِقَ ٱلْبَصَرُ ﴿٧﴾

That is, the eyes will glaze over on seeing the terrors, and are confounded to the extent that they will not see properly.

And the moon is eclipsed, (8)

وَخَسَفَ ٱلْقَمَرُ ﴿٨﴾

That day it will be a dull mass without light.

And the sun and the moon are gathered, (9)

وَجُمِعَ ٱلشَّمْسُ وَٱلْقَمَرُ ﴿٩﴾

The planetary system of which they are a part will be overturned, and each will be beside the other.

The human that day says 'Where to flee?' (10)

يَقُولُ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ ٱلْمَفَرُّ ﴿١٠﴾

Those who say that the day of resurrection is false will on that day say where is the place of flight from these terrors. His self-questioning indicates that he knows there is no place to flee; it is a sigh of regret at his realisation that there is no possibility of escape.

Nay, there is no stronghold; (11)

كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ ﴿١١﴾

Nay, there is no possibility of escape; stronghold is given for *wazar*, meaning what a person fortifies himself by, such as mountains and so on. There is no sanctuary or asylum to flee to.

Unto your Lord that day is the settlement; (12)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ ٱلْمُسْتَقَرُّ ﴿١٢﴾

On that day the final destination of all is towards your Lord, that is towards His reckoning – the virtuous will settle in His Garden, the wicked in His fire.

The human is informed that day of what he sent ahead and what he sent later. (13)

يُنَبَّؤُا۟ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ يَوْمَئِذٍۭ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ ﴿١٣﴾

On the day of resurrection an individual will be informed by Allah, glory be to Him, through the medium of the Prophets and the witnesses, of what he sent ahead to the hereafter while he was alive, in the way of virtuous deeds, and of what he arranged to be dispatched after his death, such as establishing a trust that gives charity after his death. He is informed of this for the requital and the recompense, for whether righteous or wicked he will be read what he did and then requited.

And though the human may offer various excuses, they will not be accepted from him:

Nay, rather the human is an observer over himself, (14)

بَلِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِۦ بَصِيرَةٌ ﴿١٤﴾

‘An observer *(baṣīrah);* it means one who is acutely aware. Or it may mean a perspicuous proof. For the limbs and parts of the body will testify as to what he has done.

Though he cast his excuses. (15)

وَلَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُۥ ﴿١٥﴾

If he gives excuses they will not be accepted from him. Or he knows what he did even though he offers excuses with his manifest speech.

Here the flow turns to direct the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, about how to bear the Qur’an, as it had been revealed to him. Perhaps the connection is the relation between the Qur’an and the actions that the Qur’an throws light on.

From Ibn ᶜAbbās it is narrated that the Messenger, while the Qur’an was being revealed to him, would hasten by moving his tongue, out of his fondness for it and desirous of remembering it, and fearing that he might forget it. Others have narrated what is similar. Perhaps, then, this happened during this surah, occasioning the directive to come here:

Animate not thy tongue with it to hasten it; (16)

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِۦ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِۦٓ ﴿١٦﴾

The Messenger was not to put his tongue into motion with the Qur’an, in reciting it word by word as the archangel Gabriel recited it to him, before the

revelation was complete. The implication is that he would do this in order to grasp it and not forget it.[27]

Indeed upon Us is its gathering and its reciting. (17)

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُۥ وَقُرْءَانَهُۥ ١٧

The composition and compilation of the Qur'an and its recitation to the Messenger was a matter for Allah, glory be to Him.

So when We recite it, follow its recital; (18)

فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَٰهُ فَٱتَّبِعْ قُرْءَانَهُۥ ١٨

That is, when Gabriel recites it to thee, follow or concentrate on that recital.

Thereupon, on Us is its clarification. (19)

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُۥ ١٩

That is, it was for Allah to ensure the elucidation and clarification of the Qur'an's areas of brevity and conciseness, and of its metaphors, just like its compilation and recital. The concern of the Messenger was the messengership and the conveyance. And it really is a thing of amazement that were it not for the nature of prophethood, how would it be possible for a person to remember such a large volume of scripture without repeating the recital from a book. Do you not see how even the most eloquent of speakers, with the best of memories, ascend the pulpit and even if they speak the amount of just two pages, afterwards they cannot recite the same thing a second time exactly like they did at first? The promise of Allah, glory be to Him, to the Messenger in His word, '*We shall set thee to recite so thou shall not forget*' [87: 6], was what enabled the Messenger to remember it at a single reading from Gabriel. And were the Messenger not truthful in his claim, as the disbelievers maintained, how would it have been possible for him to have had such a marvellous memory?

The current then turns to its former topic, in His word.

---

[27] The allusion of this animation of the tongue and the haste in reciting the verses of the holy Qur'an is that the holy prophet is indicating his passion to learn the holy Qur'an, and as such he is setting an example for the faithful to endeavour to learn the holy Qur'an. For otherwise the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*, is *ma^{c}sūm* and thus immune from forgetfulness.

Nay, but ye are fond of the hasty, (20) كَلَّا بَلۡ تُحِبُّونَ ٱلۡعَاجِلَةَ ٢٠

Nay, ... The disbelievers (the pronoun is plural) do not reflect on the Qur'an, and do not deliberate on the resurrection, wishing instead to be brazen onwards. ***... but ...*** Instead of that:

... ye are fond of the hasty. They love the hasty; that is, the transient, material world.

And ye leave aside the hereafter (21) وَتَذَرُونَ ٱلۡأٓخِرَةَ ٢١

They forsake the hereafter and do not act for its account.

But know this: he who acts here for the hereafter will there be in goodness; whereas he who fails to act will be in a vile condition:

Faces that day are radiant, (22) وُجُوهٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ نَّاضِرَةٌ ٢٢

On the day of resurrection some faces will be bright, radiant in their joy; they are the faces of the believers.

Towards their Lord looking forward; (23) إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٞ ٢٣

'looking forward' is used for *nādhirah,* looking as in *intidhār* which means awaiting. They looking forward towards His mercy, profusion and grace, glory be to Him.

And faces that day are scowling, (24) وَوُجُوهٞ يَوۡمَئِذِۭ بَاسِرَةٞ ٢٤

Some faces on the day of resurrection will be overcast with an intense frown, for an effect of sorrow and fear is that the face frowns. These are the faces of the disbelievers and of the disobedient.

Supposing that a backbreaking calamity will be done to them. (25) تَظُنُّ أَن يُفۡعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٞ ٢٥

The people behind those faces will suppose this. Attributing the verb to the faces themselves is metaphorical. 'Calamity' is given for *fāqirah*, meaning a calamity that breaks the spine in the back, so severe is it. 'Suppose' is given for *dhann*, which is used on account of how the human, on seeing that the

chastisement is near, does not admit that it will descend on him, for he hopes that it will be diverted. And so he supposes he will be punished, but is not sure.

Nay, when it reaches the collarbone, (26) كَلَّآ إِذَا بَلَغَتِ ٱلتَّرَاقِيَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Nay, ... That is, the affair is not as the disbelievers presently suppose, that there is a world but no hereafter.

... when it reaches the collarbone, The fallacy of their claim will become clear to them when it reaches the collarbone; that is, when the soul reaches the collarbone, a way of indicating the approach of death.

And it is said, 'Who is the ascender?' (27) وَقِيلَ مَنۡۜ رَاقٖ ﴿٢٧﴾

The angels will ask of each other which of them is to take the soul of the person forward: the angels of mercy or the angels of the chastisement.

And he will suppose that it is the separation, (28) وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ ٱلۡفِرَاقُ ﴿٢٨﴾

That is, the person dying or those around him will suppose that it is his separation from the world and his loved ones.

And one leg is twisted around the other, (29) وَٱلۡتَفَّتِ ٱلسَّاقُ بِٱلسَّاقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

The term indicates the impossibility of returning to the world, and of recovering from death, for the person whose legs are bound, one to the other, has no possibility of flight and escape from what is disagreeable.

To thy Lord that day is the herding. (30) إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوۡمَئِذٍ ٱلۡمَسَاقُ ﴿٣٠﴾

On the day of death a person's soul is herded and driven. He has no choice. His life in the world is over.

So, he did not confirm and he did not pray, (31) فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ ﴿٣١﴾

So, ...That is, so did the disbeliever perform the deeds that would save him there? Nay!

... he did not confirm ... He did not confirm what it was obligatory for him to confirm, e.g. belief in Allah, His Messengers, Resurrection, etc.

... and he did not pray. He did not perform his obligatory prayers to Allah, glory be to Him.

But rather he belied and turned back; (32) وَلَـٰكِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٣٢﴾

Instead, he belied Allah and what else he needed to believe. And he turned away from the truth.

Moreover, he went to his folk strutting. (33) ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهِۦ يَتَمَطَّىٰٓ ﴿٣٣﴾

That is, he returned to his family proud and conceited at his having belied. 'Strutting' is put for *yatamaṭṭā*. The meaning is that his calling lies to the truth led him to strut pompously and arrogantly back to his people, stretching his body upwards. Perhaps he is cited as behaving this way on returning to this folk on account of how it is only on returning to them from outside the house that his arrogance and haughtiness really becomes clear to them.

Worthier for thee, worthier! (34) أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ ﴿٣٤﴾

The pronoun is singular. The address now turns to the disbeliever directly; that "the state you are in is worthier for you than that of faith and obedience". The wicked condition of the arrogant and the belier of the truth was more appropriate for him than the beauty to which the Messenger called him. The repetition is to emphasise the transgressor's lack of receptivity to faith and guidance.

Moreover, worthier for thee, worthier! (35) ثُمَّ أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰٓ ﴿٣٥﴾

This repetition is for emphasis.

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah once took Abu Jahl by the hand and said to him, 'Worthier for thee, worthier! Moreover, worthier for thee, worthier!'

'With what do you threaten me? Neither you nor your Lord are able to do anything to me; as I am the most powerful of the people of this valley (i.e. the

City of Makkah, which is surrounded by mountains)!' Abu Jahl replied. And so Allah, glory be to Him, revealed the āyah. [End of narration]

Of course the Messenger and his Lord, the Most High, were able to have done everything to Abu Jahl. And Abu Jahl was killed at Badr, whereupon he entered into the inferno.

The term 'worthier for thee' (*awla lak*) is a warning, [given the stature and position of the Abu Jahl in the then community, who was the chief of Quraysh], meaning: 'You shall soon see the consequences of the deviated path you have chosen.'

Does the human reckon that he will be aimlessly forsaken? (36)

أَيَحۡسَبُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ أَن يُتۡرَكَ سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾

Does he think that his life is in vain, with no commands, no prohibitions, no reckoning and no requital?

Was he not a drop of ejaculated sperm? (37)

أَلَمۡ يَكُ نُطۡفَةٗ مِّن مَّنِيّٖ يُمۡنَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

Does he not deduce from this and from his various transformations that Allah is able to return him?

Then he was a blood-clot; So He created and then fashioned, (38)

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةٗ فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

The sperm become a blood-clot; then Allah created from it a human being. He then fashioned him, giving him all limbs, faculties, and endowments.

And from him put the two genders, male and female (39)

فَجَعَلَ مِنۡهُ ٱلزَّوۡجَيۡنِ ٱلذَّكَرَ وَٱلۡأُنثَىٰٓ ﴿٣٩﴾

Who can be seen to have done all this, other than Allah, glory be to Him?

Is That not powerful enough to give life to the dead? (40)

أَلَيۡسَ ذَٰلِكَ بِقَٰدِرٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَن يُحۡـِۧيَ ٱلۡمَوۡتَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

Is That ... 'That' *(dhālika)* means Allah, glory be to Him.

... not powerful enough to give life to the dead? He who is able to create is able to recreate. How then does the disbeliever deny His capability, glory be to Him, of the bringing about of the rising and the resurrection?

Surah al-Insān (76)

‘The Human’

سورة الانسان

The surah is also called *al-Dahr*, meaning ‘Time’. The surah derives these two names from the prominence within it of the words *al-dahr*, meaning the age, time, or period, and *al-insān*, meaning the human being. Like the other Madinan surahs it is composed of matters relating to the Islamic order, while tending towards dealing with matters of faith. Just as Surah *al-Qiyāmah* concluded on the topic of a person's conditions from the time of his being a drop of sperm until his being raised to full maturity, so this surah opens on the human's origin, and the return and resurrection that is arranged for him.

The surah was sent down on the twenty-fifth of Dhi1-Hijjah, about Ali, Fāṭimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, *peace be upon them*, and a servant girl they had who was named Fiḍḍah. The circumstance was that al-Hasan and al-Husayn, were ill, and so the Messenger visited them along with a group of his companions. The Messenger said to Ali, ‘O Abul-Hasan, if you vowed for your two sons (recovery) ...’ And so he made a vow *(nadhr*) to fast for three days if Allah, glory be to Him, would cure them. Fāṭimah made the same vow and so did Fiḍḍah. al-Hasan and al-Husayn, recovered, and so Imam Ali, Lady Fāṭimah and Fiḍḍah started to fast, as well as al-Hasan and al-Husayn, who joined their parents in the fast. The family performed the fast of day one while they had nothing whatsoever. Ali borrowed three measures of barley from a Jew, and Lady Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’, *peace be upon her,* ground one measure and made bread with it, and after performing the *maghrib* prayer she put it before the family for break of the fast. At that moment a pauper came to them and called them and requested of them; Ali gave him his loaf, and so did Lady Fāṭimah followed by Hasan and Husayn, and Fiḍḍah, and themselves ended their fast with no more than water. The second day they all fasted, and again Fāṭimah, ground a measure and cooked bread with it. After *maghrib* prayers she put it before the family for the meal, when suddenly there was an orphan at the door seeking food. Like the day before, they each gave him their bread while they themselves tasted nothing but water for their meal. The third day Fāṭimah, took the third measure , ground it and made bread, and after *maghrib* prayers when they were about to break the fast, a captive appeared at the door seeking food. So they gave him their five loaves and broke their fasts with nothing but water. So when it was the fourth day and they had performed their vows, Imam Ali went with al-Hasan and al-Husayn, to see the Messenger of Allah *may Allah bless him and his family*. On seeing them and witnessing their

condition of weakness the Messenger wept, and then Gabriel was sent down with this surah.

In some narrations Allah, glory be to Him, sent down a spread of food from the sky for them.

And it is said that among the wonders of this surah is that it describes all the blessings of paradise with the exception of paradise's 'beauties' *(al-ḥūr),* out of respect for Lady Fāṭimah, *peace be upon her.*

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, … Beginning by the name of Allah who is the First before all things, so it is a thing of beauty to begin with His noble name in every affair.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on everyone with shortcomings, fulfilling their shortcomings, amongst which is the forgiveness of man's shakiness, so that it is as if he does not sin.

Has there come upon the human a period of all time when he was not a thing recalled? (1)

هَلۡ أَتَىٰ عَلَى ٱلۡإِنسَٰنِ حِينٞ مِّنَ ٱلدَّهۡرِ لَمۡ يَكُن شَيۡـٔٗا مَّذۡكُورًا ﴿١﴾

The interrogative is for assertion, for a person to admit this truth, and it becomes clear to him that since he was not and now is, that which brought him into being is able to restore him after destroying him. ‘Time’ is put for *dahr*, meaning a long period of time passed. He was not a thing recalled. He was non-existent, with no consequences, no influence, nothing. The implied answer is ‘yes, there was such a time.’ And: ‘can anyone deny the reality of this?’

Indeed We have created the human from a mingled sperm-drop; We try him, so We made him hearing, seeing. (2)

إِنَّا خَلَقۡنَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِن نُّطۡفَةٍ أَمۡشَاجٖ نَّبۡتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلۡنَٰهُ سَمِيعَۢا بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

The sperm-drop is composed of mingled substances, the sperm of the man and that of the woman, and of the various elements of what is eaten. He is created to be tested, in that he is subject to obligations: will he perform them with beauty or in evil. Thus he was made to hear and to see, for the obligations upon him to be complete.

Indeed We have guided him to the path, whether he is grateful or ungrateful. (3)

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَٰهُ ٱلسَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا ۝٣

Man is guided to the path, through the raising of the Messengers and the sending of the Books. Either man is grateful for the blessings of Allah, glory be to Him, through belief and obedience. Or he is ungrateful, given for *kafūr*, for every disbeliever is ungrateful relative to the various times and conditions.

Indeed We have prepared for the disbelievers chains, fetters and a blaze. (4)

إِنَّآ أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ سَلَٰسِلَا۟ وَأَغْلَٰلًا وَسَعِيرًا ۝٤

They will be dragged along in chains of iron, and bound in fetters. And there is a raging, blazing fire ahead of them. All of this is prepared for them in the hereafter.

Indeed the righteous shall be drinking of a cup whose mixture is camphor: (5)

إِنَّ ٱلْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِن كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ۝٥

The righteous *(al-abrār)* shall be drinking the cool, pleasant drinks of paradise, in which camphor *(kāfūr)* is mixed, denoting the coolness of those drinks, their sweetness and their pleasant fragrance. It seems that their drinking is given precedence on account of its connection to the preceding word 'flame', from which one seeks relief by drinking water.

The Arabs would sometimes mix their wine with camphor and sometimes with ginger. Thus it is stated that the drinks of paradise are like this, appropriate to the Arabs' understanding, for the food there is different from the food and drink of the world, in delight and goodness.

A fountain, Allah’s worshippers drink from it; they open it up, opening. (6)

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ ٱللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ۝٦

That is, those cups will be filled from a spring. Those who are given this good news are the servants of Allah, who worship Him and obey Him with a just and fitting obedience. ‘They open it up’ is given for *yufajjirūnahā,* meaning to set it flowing. What is meant is that as and when they like they will be able to

draw the water of the spring from their own dwellings and palaces, for that itself is a pleasure and a delight.

The servants of Allah are then described:

They fulfil the vow and they fear a day whose evil is widespread. (7)

يُوفُونَ بِٱلنَّذۡرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوۡمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُۥ مُسۡتَطِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

They fulfil the vow ... While in the world they were such that whenever they made a vow, they fulfilled their vow. 'Vow' is given for *nadhr*, which is that a person binds some good upon himself for His sake, glory be to Him, like vowing to fast or give charity or suchlike.

... and they fear a day whose evil is widespread ... And they fear the day, that is the terrors of that day – the day of resurrection – whose evil is widespread, meaning that it is everywhere and will embrace every disbeliever and sinner, unlike the evils of the world that are particular to a country, or person or place.

And they feed food out of love to a pauper and an orphan and a captive: (8)

وَيُطۡعِمُونَ ٱلطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۦ مِسۡكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾

And they feed food out of love ... 'out of love' is given for *ᶜalā ḥubbihi*, literally: upon, or over, love for Him, or for it. It means that they feed the food for His sake, glory be to Him. It may also mean that they feed the food though they love that food for themselves on account of their hunger.

... to a pauper ...'Pauper' is given for *miskīn*, a person whose poverty renders him inactive *(sākin)*, for whereas the wealthy person is active in different fields the pauper is inactive, as he has no wealth to spend in his concerns.

... and an orphan ... And on the orphan, a child whose father has died, or both his parents, or even just his mother.

... and a captive. That is, a person taken in war.

The purified Household, *peace be upon them,* fulfilled their vow and fed food to all three categories, as shown above.

Their intention in giving the food was that:

We feed ye but for the face of Allah, we neither want from ye a recompense nor thanks; (9)

إِنَّمَا نُطۡعِمُكُمۡ لِوَجۡهِ ٱللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمۡ جَزَآءً وَلَا شُكُورًا ﴿٩﴾

The meaning is that they feed that food for the sake of Allah, glory be to Him. The use of the word 'face' is to illustrate intention and orientation; it is a metaphorical usage derived from the fact that it is the face of a person we direct ourselves towards, when we are trying to please that person.

Indeed we fear from our Lord a frowning, catastrophic day. (10)

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِن رَّبِّنَا يَوۡمًا عَبُوسًا قَمۡطَرِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

They fear, were they to disobey Him in failing to fulfil their vow, or in failing to feed the destitute for His sake, a day of dread that would cause faces to frown. Catastrophic: a day of extreme difficulty and hardship.

So Allah guards them from the evil of that day, and presents them to radiance and joy. (11)

فَوَقَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡيَوۡمِ وَلَقَّىٰهُمۡ نَضۡرَةً وَسُرُورًا ﴿١١﴾

Allah protects them from the horrors of the day of resurrection, and presents to them, grants to them, radiance and beauty of the face and joy in the heart.

And He recompenses them for their restraint with a garden and with silk. (12)

وَجَزَىٰهُم بِمَا صَبَرُواْ جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

They are rewarded for their patience with gardens as an abode, and with silk for clothing.

Reclining therein on couches, neither seeing therein a sun nor a frost. (13)

مُّتَّكِـِٔينَ فِيهَا عَلَى ٱلۡأَرَآئِكِۖ لَا يَرَوۡنَ فِيهَا شَمۡسًا وَلَا زَمۡهَرِيرًا ﴿١٣﴾

In the gardens they will recline on thrones or couches *(arā'ik)*, and will be troubled neither by heat nor by cold.

And close to them are its shades, and its clusters are made lowly, made lowly, (14)

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيۡهِمۡ ظِلَٰلُهَا وَذُلِّلَتۡ قُطُوفُهَا تَذۡلِيلًا ﴿١٤﴾

The shade from the trees in paradise is near to them, as the light in paradise – and in it there is some heat – is shaded by trees, and by walls and roofs of the palaces. And the climate is more pleasant and agreeable in the shade, and it seems that it is arranged in this way so that a person may seek a change of temperature between the shade and the heat, and vice versa. Clusters of fruit weigh down their branches, so that they can easily be picked by hand, so close by are they and so near to the ground.

And vessels of silver are passed around them, and goblets that are glass, (15)

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِـَٔانِيَةٍ مِّن فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَاْ ﴿١٥﴾

Those who pass them around are the immortal youths mentioned below. ‘Vessels’ is put for *āniyah*, meaning a jug or pitcher or suchlike used to contain water. Perhaps they will be full of wine. ‘Goblets’ is put for *akwāb*, small vessels used for drinking: the wine is poured from the vessels into the goblets for the righteous to drink from. The goblets are made of a glass.

Glass of silver, they are determined precisely. (16)

قَوَارِيرَاْ مِن فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

The goblets are of a glass that is the colour of silver, so that they present the sight with two pleasures. Imam al-Ṣādiq has said that sight penetrates the silver of paradise just as it penetrates glass.

Thus the goblets of paradise have the clarity and transparency of glass, and the whiteness and softness of silver. And they are precisely determined, meaning measured, so that the goblets have such a uniform shape and dimensions that it is as if they are made by machine; unlike vessels made by hand whose differences are apparent to the eye, and jolt the sensibilities.

And they shall be given to drink therein a cup whose admixture is ginger. (17)

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنجَبِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾

‘They’ means the righteous mentioned earlier. ‘Therein’ means in the Garden. They shall be given a cup, meaning a drink from a cup, whose admixture is ginger, in that mixed with the drink will be something resembling ginger, the well-known spice that is used for mixing with drinks.

A fountain therein; it is called Salsabil. (18)

عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّىٰ سَلْسَبِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

'Therein' means in paradise. The drink mixed with ginger issues from that spring. It is called 'Salsabīl' on account of its flowing *(sayalānihi)* in streams sweet, refreshing and resplendent; or on account of its being so palatable due to its purity and lightness. So it is not to be imagined that the ginger will lead to heartburn or discomfort.

And eternalised youths shall circle around them; when thou see them thou will reckon them to be pearls, scattered. (19)

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنثُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

And eternalised youths shall circle around them; ... 'Circle around' is given for *yaṭūfu*, from *ṭawāf.* Here it means to pass from one to another and then to another and so on, until arriving back at the first. The meaning of 'eternalised' *(mukhalladūn)* is that they remain eternally in paradise. The 'youths' is given for *wildān*. They are the male equivalent of the 'beauties' or 'houries' of paradise *(al-ḥūr);* they are the youths while the beauties are the maidens.

... when thou see them thou will reckon them to be pearls, scattered. When thou see them, O human, thou will imagine them to be pearls, on account of their radiance and delicate appearance, and as they move about they will be taken for pearls scattered about rather than arranged on a thread, as they busily disperse carrying out their duties.

And when thou see there, thou shall see blessings and a great dominion. (20)

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

When thou, O Messenger, or O observer, see that place *(thamma* means 'there' or 'that place'), meaning the Garden, you will see blessings and a great estate. Yes, for the least of the people of paradise will be granted a dwelling from amongst the palaces and gardens sufficient to entertain the two species of men and jinn at a single sitting.

Upon them will be robes of green silk with brocade, and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord shall give them to drink a pure drink. (21)

عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُندُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِن فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴿٢١﴾

They are dressed in clothing made of fine green silk, with brocades *(istabraq),* made of rough silk. The fine silk is kinder to the body, the rough silk more pleasing to the eye. They shall be adorned by wearing jewellery: bracelets made of silver. It used to be the habit of kings and the powerful to adorn themselves with a wristband, or bracelet. Their Lord shall give them to drink of a pure wine, unlike wine in the world that is unclean and leads to vices like drunkenness and suchlike.

'Indeed this is a recompense for you,' and 'Your effort is thanked'. (22)

إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَآءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُم مَّشْكُورًا ﴿٢٢﴾

These are the words that will be addressed to the people of the Garden. The delights in which they find themselves are a recompense for their faith and righteous deeds, so that their effort and their struggle while in the world has not gone unthanked: Allah, glory be to Him, will be thankful for it and will have appreciated it, and so He will reward them with these blessings.

After having explained the recompense of the two worlds, the flow now turns to hearten the Messenger, and console him for the trouble he was receiving on the path of calling people to such blessings as those mentioned:

Indeed We Ourselves have sent down the Qur'an upon thee, consummately. (23)

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ تَنزِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾

The emphasis of the repeated pronoun 'We' is to refute the claims of the disbelievers about the Qur'an, that it is sorcery or poetry or taught by man and suchlike.

So be restrained for the affair of thy Lord, and do not obey among them a sinner or a disbeliever. (24)

فَٱصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ ءَاثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا ﴿٢٤﴾

That is: be patient, O Messenger of Allah, for the sake of thy obedience to Allah, glory be to Him. He was to continue to propagate His message in the midst of the storm raised by their denial, persecution and mockery. And he was not to follow any sinner in his sin or disbeliever in his disbelief, in failing to propagate a matter of faith or of obligation in obedience to them, seeking to please them. It is recorded that Abu Jahl used to proscribe the Messenger from

the prayer, along with ᶜUtbah and al-Walīd. They said to him, 'Come away from this affair and we will satisfy thee with wealth and with wives.' The āyah has a general meaning covering every disbeliever who urges to disbelief and every sinner who encourages to sin.

And recall the name of thy Lord morning and afternoon. (25)

وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلاً ﴿٢٥﴾

That is: he was to recall the name of the Lord, with remembrance, supplications and the prayer, at the two ends of the day.

And of the night, prostrate to Him, and glorify Him in the long night. (26)

وَمِنَ ٱلَّيْلِ فَٱسْجُدْ لَهُۥ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلاً طَوِيلاً ﴿٢٦﴾

And of the night, prostrate to Him, ... That is: during a part of the night, prostrate to Allah, glory be to Him, meaning prayer and worship. In other words, he was to surrender himself to Allah, glory be to Him.

... and glorify Him ... He was to express his declarations that He is above all that is unworthy of Him.

... in the long night. The night is the spring-time of the devoted, they take its duration as a means for submissiveness and supplication, for the deepest impulses are only activated by a long submissiveness and humility.

It is narrated that 'morning' in these āyāt signifies the morning prayer *(al-fajr)*, 'afternoon' signifies the noon *(al-dhuhr)* and afternoon *(al-ᶜaṣr)* prayers, 'prostrate to Him' signifies the two evening prayers *(al-maghrib* and *al-ᶜisha)*, while 'glorify Him' signifies the night-prayer *(al-layl)*.

Indeed those, they love the hasty and leave aside a heavy day before them. (27)

إِنَّ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ يُحِبُّونَ ٱلْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُونَ وَرَآءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيلاً ﴿٢٧﴾

The disbelievers who turn from Allah, glory be to Him, and direct themselves to their cravings and desires, love the life of the world and its temporary pleasures. They forsake and desert their futures: a grievous day that is weighty on man on account of the terrors and difficulties. They do not work for that day.

They disbelieve in Allah who created them and in His hands are their lives and livelihood:

We created them, and We strengthened their vigour; and if We wish it We substitute their like, a substitute. (28)

نَّحۡنُ خَلَقۡنَٰهُمۡ وَشَدَدۡنَآ أَسۡرَهُمۡۖ وَإِذَا شِئۡنَا بَدَّلۡنَآ أَمۡثَٰلَهُمۡ تَبۡدِيلاً ﴿٢٨﴾

That is: Allah created them from nothing. And He strengthened them in their creation, by giving order to their constituent parts. 'Vigour' is given for *asr*, that originally meant severity (*shadd*); that is why a prisoner of conflict is called an *asir*, as he suffers the severity of being bound by a rope. So the meaning is: We strengthened their vigour in their creation, by making them such that there is no incongruity or rift between their constituent parts, but all interlocked and are interwoven. 'And when if wish it We substitute for them the like of them – that is, We put others in their place; We destroy them and bring others like them to take their place. '

Indeed this is a reminder, so whoever wills it takes unto his Lord a path. (29)

إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦ تَذۡكِرَةٌۖ فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلاً ﴿٢٩﴾

This surah, or this set of teachings and warnings borne by the Qur'an, is a reminder to man of what has been placed in his human nature, calling their attention towards existence and His portents. He who wills it will take a path unto his Lord, the path of His satisfaction, glory be to Him, after having seen the real, and having made the distinction between truth and falsehood.

And ye do not will it unless Allah wills it; truly Allah is Knowing, Wise. (30)

وَمَا تَشَآءُونَ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٣٠﴾

Nobody wishes belief and guidance, unless Allah wishes it, by sending Messengers and clarifying the way. Guidance has two aspects: one is His establishing the proof; and one is man's accepting the proof and being guided by it. Allah knows our best interests, and is Wise in what He does. Wisdom is the placing of each thing in its place; Allah acts only with wisdom and discretion.

He enters whom He wills into His mercy, while the wrongful – He has prepared for them a painful chastisement. (31)

يُدۡخِلُ مَن يَشَآءُ فِي رَحۡمَتِهِۦۚ وَٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا أَلِيمَۢا ﴿٣١﴾

He places whomever He wishes in the felicity of the world and the Hereafter; but it is not haphazard, rather He places there His righteous servants. As for 'the wrongful' *(dhālimīn)*, who wrong themselves by disbelief or disobedience, theirs is a painful chastisement, with a wretched life in the world, and the fire and torment in the hereafter.

Surah al-Mursalāt (77)
‘The Envoys’

سورة المرسلات

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-mursalāt,* meaning ‘the envoys’ those despatched on a mission. Like the other Makkan surahs, it deals with the principal matters of faith. As surah *al-Insān* concluded on the topic of resurrection, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, … We begin the surah by the name of Allah who is the real God – other than Him all gods are false.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. That is, He who bestows upon everything in creation, and guides it to its benefits, and prepares for it a beautiful future. The name ‘the Compassionate’ *(al-Raḥmān)* and His similar such names are certainly meant to indicate the results of these attributes, in that it is absurd for them to have the meaning for Him that they have for us.

By the envoys, as a mane, (1)

وَٱلۡمُرۡسَلَٰتِ عُرۡفٗا ١

An oath by the angels dispatched to the earth; who resemble a horse's mane in their successive uninterrupted waves. The ‘mane’ is the hair that grows on a horse's neck.

Thereupon, by the gusters, gusting, (2)

فَٱلۡعَٰصِفَٰتِ عَصۡفٗا ٢

Then an oath by the angels who raise gusts of wind in executing His command, glory be to Him. ‘Gusting’ is put for *ᶜaṣfan,* and the repetition is to affect emphasis.

And by the spreaders, spreading, (3)

وَٱلنَّٰشِرَٰتِ نَشۡرٗا ٣

An oath by the angels who unroll the books and spread them; or who unroll the life spans and the sustenance and whatever Allah orders be unrolled and spread. ‘Spreading’ is put for the verbal noun *nashran,* which is put for emphasis. The use of ‘and’ *(wa)* is for eloquence.

Then by the dividers, dividing, (4)

فَٱلۡفَٰرِقَٰتِ فَرۡقٗا ۝٤

That is: by the angels who separate and make the distinctions between things according to the command of Allah, glory be to Him. The verb's noun is once more used to affect emphasis.

Then by the hurlers, of remembrance, (5)

فَٱلۡمُلۡقِيَٰتِ ذِكۡرًا ۝٥

The oath is by the angels who hurl the messages, reminders and remembrance from Allah, glory be to Him, into the hearts of the Prophets.

Excusing or warning, (6)

عُذۡرًا أَوۡ نُذۡرًا ۝٦

They hurl the remembrance that is either the justification of or the warning for the punishments to come if they continue in their disbelief and disobedience. They hurl remembrance that provides sufficient reason and proofs to mankind, such that there remains no excuse for them for their disbelief, and they would have therefore been warned in advance. It is also said that remembrance is sent so that it be 'excuse' for those who believe, and a 'warning' for those disbelief.

Indeed that which ye are promised will occur. (7)

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَٰقِعٞ ۝٧

The oath by these types of angels is to the effect that that which we are promised – the terrors of the resurrection and the Garden and hell – will most certainly happen. Nothing will stop it.

He then explains some signs of the resurrection, in His word:

So when the stars are extinguished, (8)

فَإِذَا ٱلنُّجُومُ طُمِسَتۡ ۝٨

The stars will be made to lose their light, till they have no light and are dark.

And when the sky is broken apart, (9)

وَإِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ فُرِجَتۡ ۝٩

Splits and cleavages will appear in the sky, due to the collapse of the planetary order.

And when the mountains are pulverised, (10) وَإِذَا ٱلْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ ﴿١٠﴾

The mountains will be plucked from their places and reduced to a dust, and scattered in the atmosphere.

And when the Messengers are gathered for appointment, (11) وَإِذَا ٱلرُّسُلُ أُقِّتَتْ ﴿١١﴾

That is, when they are gathered at the specific time on the resurrection day to testify about their peoples.

For what day have they been delayed? (12) لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُجِّلَتْ ﴿١٢﴾

Conditions will be such that it will be asked: what is the day for which the gathering of the Messengers is delayed? Why are they gathered? This is to signify the gravity of that day and the measure of its terrors.

For the day of separation! (13) لِيَوْمِ ٱلْفَصْلِ ﴿١٣﴾

The day on which man is separated into those of the fire and those of the gardens, the felicitous and the abject.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the day of separation?(14) وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ ﴿١٤﴾

The meaning is that the listener cannot understand the reality of that day and its terrors. The phrase conveys gravity and importance.

Woe that day to the beliers! (15) وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

'Woe' is given for *wayl,* a word used when a person is in a terrible severity. 'That day' means the day of resurrection. 'The beliers' means those who say that Allah, His Prophet and the Return are all lies.

The thread then turns to warn the beliers that they face a chastisement in the world, before the hereafter:

Did We not destroy the ancients? (16) أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

That is, were not the earlier peoples destroyed, those who called their Prophets liars? 'Ancients' is given for *awwalīn.*

Then We followed them with the Latters. (17)

ثُمَّ نُتۡبِعُهُمُ ٱلۡأٓخِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

'The Latters' *(al-ākhirīn),* means the later peoples – they were also destroyed for having called lies to their Prophets. 'The ancients' means peoples like those of Noah and the cĀd and the Thamūd. The 'Latters' were those such as the people of Lot and the Pharaoh and his people.

Thus do We act with the guilty; (18)

كَذَٰلِكَ نَفۡعَلُ بِٱلۡمُجۡرِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

In this manner Allah acts with the guilty; their destruction is like the destruction of those mentioned. 'Those guilty' is put for *al-mujrimīn*, those who are guilty of disbelief and disobedience, upon whom the chastisement will be visited. It is a warning for the disbelievers of Makkah.

Woe that day to the beliers. (19)

وَيۡلٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

Woe, that is, on the day of resurrection, to those who belie Allah, His signs and the other principles of belief.

The flow then turns to explain several of Allah's favours to man that they thank Him, after having warned them that they may fear Him:

Have We not created ye of a base liquid? (20)

أَلَمۡ نَخۡلُقكُّم مِّن مَّآءٖ مَّهِينٖ ﴿٢٠﴾

The liquid from which mankind are created is low and base.

Then We put it in a firm housing (21)

فَجَعَلۡنَٰهُ فِي قَرَارٖ مَّكِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

What is meant is the womb.

For a known amount. (22)

إِلَىٰ قَدَرٖ مَّعۡلُومٖ ﴿٢٢﴾

That is, for a specific period of time; namely, the period of pregnancy.

Then We determined, and what fine determiners; (23)

فَقَدَرۡنَا فَنِعۡمَ ٱلۡقَٰدِرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

What has gone before is determined by Allah, glory be to Him. And He is the best and most bountiful in His determining that determines all things. The implied question is whether the disbelievers persist in denying His power over the resurrection and returning the bodies alive, after they were dead.

Woe that day to the beliers. (24)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Woe on the day of resurrection to the beliers. The repetition of this phrase is for the purpose of firmly implanting the idea that it delivers, as has been explained in surah *al-Raḥmān* and elsewhere.

Have We not made the earth a container? (25)

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ ٱلْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا ﴿٢٥﴾

'container' is coined for *kifat,* meaning to encompass, restrain, or keep something. The earth is a place, which contains and restrains the creatures, and incorporates them.

Those alive and those dead? (26)

أَحْيَآءً وَأَمْوَٰتًا ﴿٢٦﴾

The earth includes and incorporates those alive with buildings and cultivation and their other daily needs, while the dead are accommodated within its interior.

And put therein lofty mountains, and watered ye with sweet water? (27)

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَٰسِىَ شَـٰمِخَـٰتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَـٰكُم مَّآءً فُرَاتًا ﴿٢٧﴾

The mountains have been put to stabilize the earth's surfaces. Sweet water comes to mankind for us to drink. Are these not evidences of one, knowing and powerful God? Do not these favours motivate you to believe in Allah and confirm His Messenger?

Woe that day to the beliers! (28)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

On the day of resurrection those who belie what was brought by the Messenger of Allah will be made to suffer chastisement.

And when the resurrection takes place, it will be said to the disbelievers:

'Go on to what ye belied; (29)

ٱنطَلِقُوٓاْ إِلَىٰ مَا كُنتُم بِهِۦ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

That is, to the fire they used to call a lie, denying its existence.

'Go on to a shadow with three divisions.' (30)

ٱنطَلِقُوٓاْ إِلَىٰ ظِلٍّ ذِى ثَلَٰثِ شُعَبٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

It seems that by shadow is meant the fire, and the shadow of its smoke. Its division into three sections is on account of their wandering in the world between disbelief, faith and hypocrisy. It is said that there is a section above them, a section to their right and a section to their left.

No shade, and it enriches not against the flames. (31)

لَّا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِى مِنَ ٱللَّهَبِ ﴿٣١﴾

The shadow does not shade the guilty from the fire; nor does it profit against the fire's flames. It rises above them, mixing with the air and giving it a hue of red, yellow or blue. That shadow is not like the shadow of a roof that affords protection against heat and flames. It is as if they lived their lives in the world under the shadow of disbelief and disobedience.

Indeed it shoots out sparks that are like palaces, (32)

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِى بِشَرَرٍ كَٱلْقَصْرِ ﴿٣٢﴾

It hurls sparks that are the size of palaces.

As if they are yellow camels. (33)

كَأَنَّهُۥ جِمَٰلَتٌ صُفْرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

The sparks are the colour of yellow camels, their volume having been given as the size of palaces. Their being likened to camels is on account of how they proceed and fly about just as camels go about here and there as they graze. This is true simply of the sparks of the fire, how then will be the fire itself?

Woe that day to the beliers! (34)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

How those who call such matters false will be treated come the day of resurrection; how harshly they are to be punished and chastised!

This is the day they will speak not, (35)

هَٰذَا يَوْمُ لَا يَنطِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

The guilty ones will be too overcome by fear and dread, and will not speak.

Nor is it permitted for them to seek excuses, (36)

وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

They will not be permitted to speak and offer their excuses for their past actions. It seems that this is an account of a stage of the resurrection, while at other stages they will speak and try to excuse themselves – for the resurrection has fifty stages, and each stage is the length of a thousand years, as has been recorded. [e.g. see Mustadrak al-Wasa'el, vol. 12, p 155]

Woe that day to the beliers. (37)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Woe on the day of resurrection to those who call Allah and His Prophet false.

It will be said to them:

This is the day of separation, We gather ye and the ancients. (38)

هَٰذَا يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ ۖ جَمَعْنَٰكُمْ وَٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

It is the day that a distinction is made between the goodly and the guilty, when each will be appointed to the place he has prepared for himself. It is the day when the disbelievers will be gathered along with the disbelievers of earlier peoples who preceded them.

So if ye have a plot, so plot! (39)

فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُونِ ﴿٣٩﴾

The address is to the disbelievers: if they have some plan to escape the chastisement, then they should go ahead and plan how to save themselves. The phrase is mocking them, for they planned and plotted against the believers while in the world.

Woe that day to the beliers! (40)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, on the day of resurrection, for those who belied that day and the rest of the message brought by the Messenger of Allah.

We have seen the position that day of the disbelievers, now we look at the position of the righteous:

Indeed the guardful will be in shade and springs (41)

إِنَّ ٱلۡمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلَٰلٖ وَعُيُونٖ ٤١

Those who are guardful against disbelief and disobedience are the shade of the trees and shrubbery of the Garden, and of their palaces. And they will be in a land bordered by springs. Or the meaning is that they will swim and bathe in the springs.

And fruits as they crave, (42)

وَفَوَٰكِهَ مِمَّا يَشۡتَهُونَ ٤٢

Fruits will be growing all around them. Fruits such that they fancy and like them and are inclined towards them.

It will be said to them:

‘Eat, and drink, sweetly, for what ye were doing!’ (43)

كُلُواْ وَٱشۡرَبُواْ هَنِيٓـَٔۢا بِمَا كُنتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُونَ ٤٣

They will be told to eat the fruits, and drink from the springs. The command mode of the grammar is not an order, rather it means that they can eat and drink as they like. Their eating and drinking will be ‘sweetly’ *(hani’an),* meaning that it will be totally free of ill effect. That will be in return for their acting virtuously in the world.

Indeed thus do we recompense the good doers. (44)

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجۡزِي ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ٤٤

‘Thus’ – meaning in the way mentioned, with blessings and delights – are those who did good with their belief and virtuous deeds recompensed.

Woe that day to the beliers! (45)

وَيۡلٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ٤٥

How will they feel when they see those blessings slip from their hands because of their corrupt lives while in the world. How they will regret!

Here the thread turns to address the guilty in the world:

Eat and enjoy a little, indeed ye are guilty; (46)

كُلُواْ وَتَمَتَّعُواْ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُم مُّجۡرِمُونَ ٤٦

Eat, O disbelievers, and enjoy the world’s enjoyments; the worldly life is but short! And indeed ye are ‘guilty’ *(mujrimūn)*, Can there be real enjoyment when above ye is such a severe chastisement?

Woe that day to the beliers! (47)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

Woe, on the resurrection day, for those who belie Allah and that which has come from Him.

And when it is said to them, 'Bow!' they bow not; (48)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ٱرْكَعُوا۟ لَا يَرْكَعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

When the beliers are told to bow and be humble for Allah, glory be to Him, they refuse, and are obstinate and haughty. The meaning of 'bow' might be just that, to bow down, or humility in general. It might be that 'to bow' signifies the prayer.

It is narrated that the āyah came down about the treaty with the tribe of Thaqīf, when the Messenger of Allah commanded them to perform the prayer. They said: 'We will not bend, for that is dishonourable for us.'

The Messenger of Allah replied, 'There is no goodness in a religion in which there is no bowing and prostrating.' [End of report]

By bending, they meant bending their backs, for they found the raising of their posteriors distasteful.

Woe that day to the beliers! (49)

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Woe to those who belie the rules, and do not confirm the bow and the rest of the acts of worship – for they will meet the recompense of that.

In what speech after this will they believe? (50)

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍۭ بَعْدَهُۥ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

By speech it is meant the Qur'an. When they do not believe in the Qur'an, which in every way is the best speech there is, can there be any hope of them in believing in anything else. Nay, it is eternal wretchedness that will envelop them, if they do not believe in this magnificent book.

Surah al-Naba' (78)

'The Announcement'

سورة النبإ

This surah has been named *al-Naba'*, and also [c]*Amma*, on account of the prominence within it of the words *al-naba'*, meaning 'the announcement', and [c]*amma*, meaning 'about what'. While the previous surah (al-Mursalāt) concluded by mentioning the resurrection and by warning those who deny it, this surah opens on the same theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning with the name of Allah – He who is first before all things.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He favours His servants by bestowing on them all that benefits them, and by forgiving them their offences.

Of what ask they each other? (1)

عَمَّ يَتَسَآءَلُونَ ﴿١﴾

'What is it the disbelievers ask amongst themselves, some of them of others?' For it is related in *Majma[c] al-Bayān* that when the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*[28], was raised by the Almighty and informed humankind of the Oneness of Allah, the Most High, and of the resurrection after death, and recited to them the Qur'an, they pretended to question each other – in a manner of denial and mock amazement – saying: 'What is this which Muhammad has brought and what is it that has started him off?' The inquiry was actually to serve the purpose of astonishment, just as you might ask, 'What a story is this!' when you wish to esteem it.

It is narrated in several narrations that what is meant by the magnificent announcement is Amir al-Mu'minin, Commander of the Believers, Imam Ali *peace be upon him*[29]. [al-Kāfi, vol. 1, pp 207, 417. Biḥār, vol. 24 / p 352; vol. 36 / pp1-4.] This is in the sense of application of the verse in general, while it

---

[28] *ṣallallāh [c]alayhi wa ālih,* meaning 'may Allah bless him and his family'. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

[29] [c]*alayhis-salām,* meaning '*peace be upon him*'. It is a mark of piety and devotion to use this salutation when mentioning the name of one of the prophets or the one of the *ma[c]sūm* Imams from the household (the Ahl al-Bayt) of the Holy Prophet.

is also the case through the inner meaning of the verse if the "magnificent announcement" is taken to be the resurrection only.

Then comes the reply:

Of the magnificent announcement (2) عَنِ ٱلنَّبَإِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢﴾

That is, an important piece of news; namely, that which concerns the origin and the return.

Over which they are in disagreement. (3) ٱلَّذِى هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Some people confirmed it on account of their following the Book (of the Jews and Christians) or suchlike, while others denied it.

Nay, soon they shall know! (4) كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Nay, things are not as they said and supposed, in their denying Allah, the message and the return. They shall soon know the result of their lying, and the veracity of the Prophet, *may Allah bless him and his family*.

Again nay, soon they shall know! (5) ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥﴾

'Again' is put for *thumma*, a word denoting order. Nay, it is not as they suppose, for upon their deaths or upon the day of resurrection they will learn that things are as told by the Prophet, and that they were lost and astray. This constitutes a warning upon a warning.

Here the thread turns to mentioning aspects of His favours – glory be to Him – as evidence of His existence and of His other attributes, as a conclusive proof (hujjat) for the disbelievers:

Have We not put the earth as a place of rest? (6) أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ ٱلْأَرْضَ مِهَـٰدًا ﴿٦﴾

That is, firm and safe, ready for utilisation, like a cradle in which a baby may be settled safe from harm.

And the mountains as pegs? (7) وَٱلْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا ﴿٧﴾

As grounding devices so that the ground does not slide about or shake, like the pegs or nails that hold planks of wood together.

And created ye in pairs? (8)

وَخَلَقْنَٰكُمْ أَزْوَٰجًا ۝٨

We are created in types and varieties, with differences in colour, language and manners of perception, and other differences.

And put your sleep as a repose, (9)

وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا ۝٩

That is, a break in activity, so as to rest.

And put the night as a garment, (10)

وَجَعَلْنَا ٱلَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا ۝١٠

That is, a covering, that covers everything like a garment covers the body. And this serves the wisdom of rest and leisure from work, for were the night like the day the human being would not break from work and would not benefit from rest. Furthermore, the darkness of the night facilitates rest and sleep.

And put the day as a livelihood, (11)

وَجَعَلْنَا ٱلنَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ۝١١

The day is the time we turn to seeking the means of sustenance and survival. It is called a livelihood (*ma^{c}āsh*) in a figurative sense, for the day is the time for seeking livelihood, not livelihood itself.

And built over ye a strong seven, (12)

وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا ۝١٢

That is: We built over you, O humankind, seven skies. They are strong, of firm construction, inviolable in their order and design.

And put a blazing lamp, (13)

وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا ۝١٣

That is, in the skies; and it means the sun. ‘Blazing’ is for being brilliant and energetic.

And from the pressurizers sent down water in torrents, (14)

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ ٱلْمُعْصِرَٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا ۝١٤

What is meant by the pressurizers (*al-muᶜṣirāt*) are the clouds, for they are subject to their own pressure, in that they have been made to contain forces and pressures that force out the rain, like a washing machine that squeezes drops of water from the clothes. Or it may be that what is meant by pressurizers are the winds that bring pressure to bear on the clouds. 'In torrents' is given for *thajjājan*, meaning heavy rainfall that descends in successive waves or rushes; from *thajja*, meaning to rain heavily.

So that We bring forth by it grains and plants, (15)

لِّنُخْرِجَ بِهِۦ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا ﴿١٥﴾

That is: 'We have made the rain descend so that We bring forth with the water of the rain grains, like wheat or corn and suchlike, and all types of cultivated plants.'

And verdurous gardens. (16)

وَجَنَّٰتٍ أَلْفَافًا ﴿١٦﴾

These are brought forth with that water. 'Verdurous' is given for *alfāf*, the plural of *laff*, which means a tree some of whose parts are wrapping round other trees. 'Gardens' is put for *jannāt*, that are so-called for their being concealed by trees.

After the mention of these proofs of the Divinity, the thread turns to explain the return:

Indeed the day of separation is a pact: (17)

إِنَّ يَوْمَ ٱلْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَٰتًا ﴿١٧﴾

The creatures shall be separated from one another, for each of them to receive the recompense of what they have done, good and bad, and this is on the day of resurrection. It is an appointment in both time and place, set for the reckoning and the recompense that Allah, glory be to Him, has given His word to. 'Pact' is given for *mīqāt*, meaning an appointment in both time and place, like each of the *mawāqīt* (plural of *mīqāt*) of the hajj.

This is then explained with His word:

The day the trumpet is blown and ye shall come in troops, (18)

يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِى ٱلصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿١٨﴾

The day is the day of separation. The trumpet will be blown by Isrāfīl for the creatures to spring up into life after death, as a trumpet is blown for a band of

travellers or a military force or suchlike to move into action. And that is the second blowing of the trumpet. [At the first blowing all living creatures will die.] And then you shall come forth from your graves, O humankind, enlivened, in groups upon groups; as if each group is to be made up of those similar in actions.

And the sky shall open and be gated, (19)

وَفُتِحَتِ ٱلسَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتۡ أَبۡوَٰبًا ﴿١٩﴾

The sky shall split and gateways will appear, and each sky will be transformed into gates from which angels will descend for the reckoning and the recompense and obedience to affairs.

And the mountains shall be put in motion and then become a mirage; (20)

وَسُيِّرَتِ ٱلۡجِبَالُ فَكَانَتۡ سَرَابًا ﴿٢٠﴾

They shall move from their position after being plucked off, and it is Allah, glory be to Him, who shall make them move. Mirage is put for *sarāb*, the imaginary perception of water in the desert heat when the sun is high. For when a person looks at the mountains he will imagine they are still there and solid as they were before, but they shall be like dust: you see something as solid and it is not solid, like a mist seen from afar is counted as something solid, when it is not.

Indeed hell is a watchtower, (21)

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتۡ مِرۡصَادًا ﴿٢١﴾

That is, like a place from which one maintains a surveillance to defend one's house or lands, or suchlike, for verily it is a place from which the angels keep a look-out on humankind, so that they see there which people are offenders and deserve the fire, and which are the good-doers who do not deserve it. 'Ambush' is given for *mirṣād*, and that is a 'Vantage point' or a place from where the enemy is watched.

For the transgressors a home, (22)

لِّلطَّٰغِينَ مَـَٔابًا ﴿٢٢﴾

That is, the place to which those who rebel against God and transgress the Divine limits return. 'Home' is given for *ma'āb*, from the root *'āba*, meaning 'to return'. It means a home, and the reason the home is called *ma'āb* is that whenever one departs from it he returns to it.

Remaining therein for ages, (23)

لَّٰبِثِينَ فِيهَآ أَحۡقَابًا ﴿٢٣﴾

The transgressors will remain alive in hell for ages: *aḥqāb*, plural of *ḥiqbah*, meaning extremely long ages or periods. It is narrated from Imām Ṣādiq, *peace be upon him*, that:

The ages (*aḥqāb*) are meant eight *aḥqāb*, and each *ḥiqbah* is eighty years, and each year is three hundred and sixty days, and each of these days is like a thousand years of your reckoning.[30]

Yet the fanatically stubborn amongst the people of error will never come out; while the sinners will leave hell after lengthy periods, according to the differences in their offences.

They shall not taste cold therein, nor a drink, (24) لَّا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا ﴿٢٤﴾

In hell, there are no cool breezes, no cool food, nothing at all shall be cold for them; and they shall have no drink to slake their increasing thirst.

Save boiling water and pus, (25) إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا ﴿٢٥﴾

That is, they shall taste only boiling water and their own pus, but shall have nothing cool and no drink.

An appropriate recompense. (26) جَزَآءً وِفَاقًا ﴿٢٦﴾

The recompense of their disbelief and sin, proportionate to their misdeeds.

The thread now turns to explain their actions that made them deserve such punishment:

Indeed they had no expectation of a reckoning, (27) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا ﴿٢٧﴾

While alive in this world they had no expectation of a reckoning. They did not expect the resurrection. Rather they denied it and called it a lie. The words 'they had no expectation' signify how whoever expects something holds the probability of being successful in what he expects.

And belied Our signs, belying! (28) وَكَذَّبُواْ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا كِذَّابًا ﴿٢٨﴾

---

30 i.e. the ages of *aḥqāb* are thus of the order of 230 million earth years!

That is, the signs of the creation, the message and the return. They rejected them and called them false.

Did they imagine they could escape from their misdeeds?

While We have counted all things in a book: (29) وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَٰهُ كِتَٰبًا ﴿٢٩﴾

Counted: everything they have ever done has been collected, counted and explained, not merely verbally, but recorded in a book.

'So taste, We shall increase ye in nothing but torment.' (30) فَذُوقُواْ فَلَن نَّزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا ﴿٣٠﴾

Therefore in hell it will be said to them: 'So taste', that is, taste this punishment and torment as recompense for your evil deeds. And: 'We shall increase ye in nothing but torment.' That is, the affair is not such to admit the probability of being halted, but rather that the pain and torment will be increased day after day and hour after hour. This is on account of how each day the punishment of that day is added to that of the previous days, even if in quality it is of the same type.

After having been made aware of the condition of the offenders in the hereafter, we are now informed about the believers:

Indeed for the guardful is an achievement: (31) إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا ﴿٣١﴾

Those who are guardful and vigilant (*al-muttaqīn*) are the believers who are careful of not offending Allah and so do not sin. Theirs shall be the achievement of success and salvation.

Gardens and vineyards, (32) حَدَآئِقَ وَأَعْنَٰبًا ﴿٣٢﴾

'Gardens' is given for *al-ḥaddā'iq*, plural of *ḥadīqah*, an arranged garden enclosed by a wall, normally small though it can be large. Vineyards are mentioned in particular as an example, and because grapes are especially delightful.

And maidens, like of age, (33) وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا ﴿٣٣﴾

Maidens (*kawāʿib*): young women with breasts swelling in the initial stages of maturity. Some of them the same age as others, or perhaps the same age as their spouses, so that they will be neither older nor younger than their spouses.

And a brimming cup, (34)

وَكَأۡسٗا دِهَاقٗا ﴿٣٤﴾

A cup so full that it can hold no more water or wine.

They hear therein no vain talk and no belying, (35)

لَّا يَسۡمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغۡوٗا وَلَا كِذَّٰبٗا ﴿٣٥﴾

Those on their guard in this world will hear no vain talk in the Garden, nor will some of them call others liars.

Yes, the believers will be in this eternal bliss as,

A recompense from thy Lord, a reckoned gift, (36)

جَزَآءٗ مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابٗا ﴿٣٦﴾

The address is to the Prophet of Allah, for the pronoun is singular. A gift according to a reckoning; calculated; the affair is not arbitrary.

Then your Lord explains things that show His magnificence, glory be to Him, with His word:

Lord of the skies and the earth and that between them, the Compassionate, with whom they have no right to converse (37)

رَّبِّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِۖ
لَا يَمۡلِكُونَ مِنۡهُ خِطَابٗا ﴿٣٧﴾

Lord of the skies and the earth and that between them, ... Everything is His creation, He elevates and raises everything.

... the Compassionate ...: This attribute is used here to denote that He is forgiving towards His servants and bestows on them forgiveness and kindness, and that they deserve the reward due to His kindness, rather than to their actions.

... with whom they have no right to converse No one has the power to talk to Allah, glory be to Him, or intercede for anyone without His permission. For He is Compassionate, Generous and Glorious; not like one who is compassionate in this world, who may be manipulated or dominated by someone for whom his heart has formed an attachment.

The words 'with whom they have no right to converse' are then clarified by His word:

On the day the Spirit and the angels stand in rows; they speak not save him whom the Compassionate has permitted, and who speaks aright. (38)

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ ٱلرُّوحُ وَٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةُ صَفًّا ۖ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا ﴿٣٨﴾

The 'Spirit' is the great angel, as has been recorded in the narrations. The angels shall stand like an army on parade before a king; and this is to increase the awe and gravity of the resurrection. Neither the spirit nor the angels, nor any speaker shall speak. All will be silence, save for the voice of him who has been given leave to speak, in any circumstance. For it seems that this is about certain stages of the day; while at other stages everyone may speak true or false, as Allah says: *'Regard how they lie against themselves.'* [6:24] And it may be that what is meant by speaking is intercession.

That day is the reality, so whosoever wills it takes unto his Lord a home. (39)

ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْيَوْمُ ٱلْحَقُّ ۖ فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ مَـَٔابًا ﴿٣٩﴾

The day that has been described is a reality, existing in actuality and not merely in potential. 'The reality' is given for *al-ḥaqq*, it being said that when a report conforms to the actuality as far as it conforms to what is actual it is called 'the truth' (*al-ṣidq*), whereas as far as the reality conforms to the report it is called *al-ḥaqq*. So whoever from amongst mankind wills it – he takes with his Lord's satisfaction and rewards a home of faith and obedience; as if the believer is taking a home with his Lord, while the disbeliever takes a home with other than his Lord, in that he distances himself from His grace and compassion through disbelief and disobedience, and so his home is not with his Lord.

Indeed We warn ye of a nigh chastisement, the day when man will look at what his hands have sent before him, and the disbeliever will say, 'O, would that I were dust!' (40)

إِنَّآ أَنذَرْنَـٰكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا يَوْمَ يَنظُرُ ٱلْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ وَيَقُولُ ٱلْكَافِرُ يَـٰلَيْتَنِى كُنتُ تُرَٰبًۢا ﴿٤٠﴾

O humankind, be warned: the hereafter is near, however people may suppose it to be distant, just as Allah has said: '*They see it as distant and We see it as near.*' That day man will see the recompense of his action and meet it. The emphasis on hands is because they are the most active part in human activities. That day the disbeliever will be in terror of the chastisement he sees, and will wish that he had been dust in the world, and not a human being to disbelieve and be afflicted with the terrible chastisement. Yet his wishing will do him no good, just as the wishing of every criminal is useless at the time of punishment.

Surah al-Nāziᶜāt (79)

'Those Who Tear Out'

سورة النازعات

This surah has been given its name due to the prominence within it of the word *al-nāziᶜāt*, meaning 'those who tear out'. Like the other Makkan surahs, this surah attends to matters of belief: the Divinity, the message and the return. As Surah al-Naba' concluded with conditions on the day of resurrection, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We seek help from the name of Allah, the Owner of every thing, the sole, absolute power and authority who has free disposal over existence;

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who graces His servants with repeated mercies in this world and the next.

By those who tear out, excessively, (1)

وَٱلنَّٰزِعَٰتِ غَرۡقٗا ١

A vow by the angels who tear out the souls of the disbelievers from their bodies harshly.

And by the active ones, actively, (2)

وَٱلنَّٰشِطَٰتِ نَشۡطٗا ٢

A vow by the angels who are zealous and energetic at the taking of the souls of the disbelievers, or who are eager and brisk at the disbelievers souls being taken off to hell.

And by the gliders, gliding, (3)

وَٱلسَّٰبِحَٰتِ سَبۡحٗا ٣

That is, a vow by the angels who glide through the space after the souls have been taken. 'Glide' is used for *sabh* meaning to move effortlessly, like a swimmer through water. The word is repeated in the verse for emphasis. It is recorded in narrations that what is meant here are the angels who take out the souls of the believers with ease, gently.

And by the proceeders, proceeding, (4)

فَٱلسَّٰبِقَٰتِ سَبۡقٗا ٤

That is, a vow by the angels who precede the souls, or the souls of the believers towards their lofty station.

And by the managers of the affair; (5) فَٱلۡمُدَبِّرَٰتِ أَمۡرٗا ۝٥

A vow by the angels who regulate affairs with Allah's permission.

These vows sworn by the said classes of angels are to the point that the content of the subsequent āyāt or portents, describing the resurrection and sky and hell, is all true and accords to the reality. The point is not given explicitly but is implicit in the content of the subsequent āyāt and their tone:

The day when the trembler trembles, (6) يَوۡمَ تَرۡجُفُ ٱلرَّاجِفَةُ ۝٦

That is: recount, O Messenger, the day when the trembler shall shake and be convulsed. The trembler is the earth, as Allah says: *'The day when the earth and the mountains tremble'.* [73: 15]

What is next follows it. (7) تَتۡبَعُهَا ٱلرَّادِفَةُ ۝٧

The convulsions of the earth will be followed by what comes after it in the disintegration of the universal order, and that is the sky. It may be that what is meant by 'the trembler' is the first trumpet, and that 'what is next' is the second trumpet.

Hearts on that day are in tumult, (8) قُلُوبٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ وَاجِفَةٌ ۝٨

On that day – the day of resurrection – hearts will be 'in tumult' *(wājifah):* in extreme agitation.

Their eyes humble; (9) أَبۡصَٰرُهَا خَٰشِعَةٞ ۝٩

The eyes attributed to the hearts, or those possessing the hearts, will be submissive and humble. They will not look anywhere save in fear, alarm, dread and shame.

They say: 'Are we to be returned to the track? (10) يَقُولُونَ أَءِنَّا لَمَرۡدُودُونَ فِي ٱلۡحَافِرَةِ ۝١٠

Here it is those whose hearts are in tumult who are cited. ‘Track’ is given for *ḥāfirah*, which is the path a person travels in, called such by reason of how that person carves (*ḥafara*) it by his footsteps. This account is of their condition in the world, where they used to ask: 'Are we to return to life after death, and be as before?' Such questioning, clearly, was framed as a denial of the hereafter.

'What, when we are bones, rotten?' (11)

أَءِذَا كُنَّا عِظَـٰمًا نَّخِرَةً ﴿١١﴾

That is: how shall we return to our former condition when we have died and become rotten bones?

They said, 'That, then, would be a lossful return.' (12)

قَالُوا۟ تِلْكَ إِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾

These same disbelievers are cited again. Speaking about the return told to them by you, the believers, they say their return to the world would be one that would occasion great loss. But of course they do not admit the truth of the return, and so they are speaking about it metaphorically. Indeed, all they say about it is a form of mockery and derision, for the idea that it might be true disturbs them.

Now comes the censure of their position, in the word of Allah:

Nay, it is but a single upbraiding, (13)

فَإِنَّمَا هِىَ زَجْرَةٌ وَٰحِدَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾

That is, the return that they find so difficult to accept is not in the least difficult for Allah, glory be to Him. The return is but a single cry that shall be raised by Isrāfīl blowing in the trumpet, the second blast. The cry is called an upbraiding (*zajrah*), by reason of it being the means of turning them from one path towards another.

And lo, they are on the surface. (14)

فَإِذَا هُم بِٱلسَّاهِرَةِ ﴿١٤﴾

All mankind will be returned from the depths of the earth to its surface. ‘Surface’ is given for *sāhirah*, for when crossing a flat plain or the desert a person remains sleepless and awake (*sāhira*) upon it and will have no repose, from fear of an enemy or of a wild beast. Here the state of restlessness has been attributed to a location, and this indicates that the resurrection will take place on a flat ground, like a huge desert plain in which there is no unevenness, no buildings and no trees.

The revelation now turns to explain some aspects of the account of Moses and the Pharaoh, that the disbelievers may heed the final end that the Pharaoh brought upon himself by his disbelief:

Has there come to thee the account of Moses, (15)

هَلۡ أَتَىٰكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰٓ ﴿١٥﴾

The story of Moses, *peace be upon him.*

When his Lord called him in the holy valley of Tuwa: (16)

إِذۡ نَادَىٰهُ رَبُّهُۥ بِٱلۡوَادِ ٱلۡمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٦﴾

This was the first time that Allah revealed to him on his return from Madyan and Shu^c^ayb towards the land of Egypt, which took place in a holy valley called Ṭuwā. It was there that Moses was spoken to by Allah, and was inspired to Messengerhood.

Allah then said to Moses:

Go to Pharaoh, verily he has transgressed, (17)

ٱذۡهَبۡ إِلَىٰ فِرۡعَوۡنَ إِنَّهُۥ طَغَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾

That is, he transgressed the limit in disbelief and sin.

So say: 'Is it for thee to purify thyself? (18)

فَقُلۡ هَل لَّكَ إِلَىٰٓ أَن تَزَكَّىٰ ﴿١٨﴾

The questioning mode is used to convey the command in a courteous manner. This means; why don't you surrender and be in harmony with the will of Allah? Do you not wish to purify yourself from disbelief and disobedience?

And 'I will guide thee to thy Lord till thou shall be in awe.' (19)

وَأَهۡدِيَكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخۡشَىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

That is: is it for you that I guide you to your Lord, lead you to Him? For man is such that he does not realise Allah's excellence save after being guided. And he should be in awe, that is, fear Him, glory be to Him, by refraining from disbelief and from disobedience; for this fear can only follow upon awareness.

So he showed him the great sign, (20)

فَأَرَىٰهُ ٱلۡأٓيَةَ ٱلۡكُبۡرَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾

That is, Moses showed the Pharaoh the great sign or miracle, namely the miracle of the staff [which turned into a serpent by God's permission].

So he belied, and disobeyed, (21)

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾

He called the miracles false and defied Moses, so that Moses' effort did not end with Pharaoh's submission to Allah, glory be to Him.

Then he turned away to strive. (22)

ثُمَّ أَدۡبَرَ يَسۡعَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾

He strove to seek something that would destroy Moses' argument, and falsify Moses' prophethood.

So he gathered and then proclaimed, (23)

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَىٰ ﴿٢٣﴾

Pharaoh summoned his court and leading officers, and addressed them.

And said: 'I am your Lord, the Most High!' (24)

فَقَالَ أَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمُ ٱلۡأَعۡلَىٰ ﴿٢٤﴾

He said to them: 'I am your Lord, the Most High, for the idols are under my divinity, and verily the Most High Lord – over whom is no other lord – is myself. It is not as Moses imagines – that I have a God over me.'

So Allah took him for punishment in the afterlife and in the former; (25)

فَأَخَذَهُ ٱللَّهُ نَكَالَ ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ وَٱلۡأُولَىٰٓ ﴿٢٥﴾

Allah took him in punishment: his being drowned along with his soldiers in the sea, and his entry into the fire. 'Punishment' is given for *nakāl*, the form of which is emphatic, meaning that Allah punishes him in the afterlife with the fire, while his first punishment was his being drowned. In other words, he was punished with the two types of punishment.

Indeed in that is a monition for whosoever fears. (26)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبۡرَةٗ لِّمَن يَخۡشَىٰٓ ﴿٢٦﴾

In the punishment of the Pharaoh is a warningful lesson for whoever fears punishment, that they be warned and realise that the outcome of disbelief is chastisement.

The account of Pharaoh with stirring brevity concluded, the revelation turns to define the limits of the disbelievers' power, and their might before the might of Allah, glory be to Him. It makes clear that they are nothing before the might

of His creation, let alone before His will, glory be to Him, His total creativity and control:

Are ye more powerful in constitution or the sky He built? (27) ءَأَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمِ ٱلسَّمَآءُ ۚ بَنَىٰهَا ﴿٢٧﴾

O humankind, or O disbelievers of Makkah, for the address is in the plural, are you stronger and more solid, or the sky? There is no doubt as to the answer: the sky is more powerful. This is not inconsistent with man being more subtle, more precise and more wondrous, for the verse speaks of power and strength, not of magnificence and precision. Allah built the sky, glory be to Him, and He who builds the sky finds nothing at all difficult for Him, and no force matches His force.

He raised its roof and then fashioned it, (28) رَفَعَ سَمْكَهَا فَسَوَّىٰهَا ﴿٢٨﴾

Allah raised its roof. Roof is given for *samk*, related to *sumk*, meaning height. Therefore, Allah glory be to Him, raised the skies expansively in an upward direction. Then He fashioned them and justified them so that they were without chinks or ruptures and there was no disorder.

And He darkened its night and brought out its light. (29) وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَىٰهَا ﴿٢٩﴾

These two things are attributed to the sky as the sky is their source, by the rising and setting of the sun.

And the earth, after that, He laid it out, (30) وَٱلْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ دَحَىٰهَآ ﴿٣٠﴾

After creating the skies and arranging their forces He spread out the earth, for first He created the earth unspread, glory be to Him, then He created the skies, and then He spread out and levelled the earth. This verse is held by our astronomers to show the movement of the earth, for spreading out (*daḥw*) implies being hurled. It is in this sense that the Commander of the Believers, Imām Ali is called 'the hurler of the gate (of fort Khaybar)' or *dāḥī al-bāb*. They find similar import in the verse: *'Have We not put the earth a container'* [77:25], 'container' being given for *kifātan*, from the restraining of a bird (*kift al-ṭayr*). Allah knows.

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعَىٰهَا ﴿٣١﴾

He brought forth its water from it and its pastures, (31)

He brought waters forth from the earth, creating its passageways, its wells and spreading its oceans. He created its fields and meadows, where flocks and herds are grazed. The meaning of it is that Allah created the earth's herbage and vegetation.

وَٱلْجِبَالَ أَرْسَىٰهَا ﴿٣٢﴾

And the mountains, He secured them; (32)

He fixed them in certain places so that the earth would not shake and break up.

And He did all this for,

مَتَٰعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَٰمِكُمْ ﴿٣٣﴾

As provision for ye and your livestock. (33)

For your pleasure (*matāᶜan*) and benefit, O humankind, and that your animals may enjoy the stability of the ground, and for you to derive your livelihoods and graze your herds and flocks. 'Livestock' is given for *anᶜām*, meaning camels, cattle, sheep and goats.

فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ ٱلطَّآمَّةُ ٱلْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿٣٤﴾

So when comes the great overwhelming, (34)

The resurrection. It is called 'the overwhelming' (*al-ṭāmma*) because it overcomes and dominates, all things. It is great (*al-kubrā*) in that it is mightier than any other frightening calamity.

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مَا سَعَىٰ ﴿٣٥﴾

The day when the human recalls his endeavour, (35)

That is, he remembers his actions, either by the internal process of memory, or by being reminded on reading his book written by the two angels appointed for the purpose. [Two angels appointed for each and every individual.]

وَبُرِّزَتِ ٱلْجَحِيمُ لِمَن يَرَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾

And the raging fire is made to appear for whosoever sees: (36)

It is Allah who makes the raging fire appear, and the raging fire is hell; all who are granted sight will see it clearly revealed.

The consequent of the conditional 'when comes...' has not been given. It is implicit in the subsequent āyāt or portents. That mankind is categorised in two groups:

So as for him who transgressed, (37) فَأَمَّا مَن طَغَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

That is, was arrogant and transgressed in disbelief and sin.

And preferred the worldly life, (38) وَءَاثَرَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا ﴿٣٨﴾

That is, rather than choose the eternal life of the future. It means that all he did was for his worldly life, and he did nothing for the hereafter.

Then indeed the raging fire, that is the abode; (39) فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَحِيمَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾

'Abode' is given for *al-ma'wā*, from the root *awa*, meaning to take a home. The sinner's road is towards the raging fire (*al-jaḥīm*).

While as for him who feared the station of his Lord, and forbade the soul from desire, (40) وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, feared the station associated with the Lord, which is the resurrection. The association is one of honour, like the phrase 'House of Allah' (*Bayt Allah*) for the Kaᶜbah. And so the meaning is that he feared the punishment of the afterlife, and restrained his soul (*nafs*) and protected it from following its desires and caprices through committing the forbidden and abandoning the obligatory.

Then indeed the garden, that is the home. (41) فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾

For that is his destination.

As the topic has been the resurrection, the revelation turns to answer the question about the timing of the resurrection:

They question thee about the Hour: 'When will it establish?' (42) يَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلسَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَىٰهَا ﴿٤٢﴾

That is, they question you, O Messenger, about the resurrection. They ask: when will it establish; that is, when will it come? 'Establish' is given for *mursā*, from *al-irsā'*, meaning to be firm, stable, steady.

But what are thou in, to recount of it? (43)

فِيمَ أَنتَ مِن ذِكْرَىٰهَآ ﴿٤٣﴾

That is, O Messenger, you have nothing to tell of the timing of the resurrection, for you do not know its timing. Just as a person within a thing is aware of its characteristics, whereas when he is external to it he remains unaware of them. The question form of '...what are thou in...?' (*fī mā anta*) is used to denote negation; it means: you have nothing to recount, for you know nothing of it; such knowledge is particular to Allah, glory be to Him.

Unto thy Lord is its finality; (44)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنتَهَىٰهَآ ﴿٤٤﴾

That is, the course towards knowledge of the Hour ends with your Lord, O Messenger of Allah. For when a person is asked about the Hour he redirects the inquiry and refers it to another, and so on until it is directed towards Allah, who knows the timing of the Hour.

Yes, the timing of the Hour does not concern thee, O Messenger, for:

Thou are but a warner of whosoever fears it: (45)

إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مُنذِرُ مَن يَخْشَىٰهَا ﴿٤٥﴾

You, O Messenger, are solely the warner of whoever fears it. Your station is to warn whoever fears the Hour. The reason that the object of the warning is limited in this way is that it is those who fear alone who will benefit from the warning; others will not benefit.

The revelation then turns to warn humankind and remind them that their time in this world is short, so short that:

It will be as if, on the day they see it, they had stayed but an afternoon, or its forenoon. (46)

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوٓا۟ إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَىٰهَا ﴿٤٦﴾

For humankind when they see the Hour and all that then happens, it will be as if they had lived in the world but for the few hours of an afternoon, or the morning of that afternoon. The meaning is that it will seem to them that they had lived in the world for no more than half a day – a morning or an afternoon.

Surah ᶜAbasa (80)
'He Frowned'

سورة عبس

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *ᶜabasa,* meaning 'he frowned'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of belief. While Surah al-Nāziᶜāt concludes by warning him who fears, this surah opens by warning a particular person.

In fact, this surah descended in reference to ᶜUthmān ibn ᶜAffān, in that he was with the Messenger along with a group of companions, when a blind man came and sat near to ᶜUthmān. So a frown appeared on ᶜUthmān's face and he turned away from him and gathered his clothing, and moved toward his wealthy friends. Then the āyāt descended.

Strange, then, that members of the Umayyad clan who hated the Messenger attributed this affair to the Prophet so as to acquit their relative ᶜUthmān, maintaining that it was the Prophet who frowned and turned away, thus contradicting the text of the magnificent Qur'an: *'Indeed thou are on a magnificent disposition'*, and *'(the Messenger is) with the believers tender, merciful...'* and suchlike.

Nevertheless, following this came a group of Wahhābis who took to lapping up this tale by which the Umayyads attributed the frowning to the Prophet, with further embellishments and flourishes. This then became a weapon in the hands some of the Christians in their attacks against the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*, so that in some of their pamphlets it is written: 'Who is better, Jesus or Muhammad? For the former used to heal the blind – by your own book: "He absolved him born blind and the leper", and by contrast, the latter frowned and turned away when a blind man came to him – again by the clear text of your own book!'

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning by the name of Allah, whose is everything in the skies and the earth. He is more worthy of beginning by His name than any other. He is the originator, in whose hands are all things.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who is merciful towards the servants by bestowing on them all that completes their shortcomings.

He frowned and turned away, (1) عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰٓ ۝١

That is, ᶜUthmān ibn ᶜAffān scowled and turned his back.

That the blind man came to him; (2) أَن جَآءَهُ ٱلۡأَعۡمَىٰ ۝٢

ᶜUthmān ibn ᶜAffān scowled and turned away because a blind man came and sat next to him. It is said that the blind man was ᶜAbdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm, who was blind (and poor).

The revelation then turns to reprehend ᶜUthmān for what he has done, addressing him directly, as is the manner of the Qur'an in addressing itself to mankind, shown in the verse 'Are ye more powerful in constitution or the sky?' [79: 28]

And what will make thee comprehend: perhaps he is becoming purified, (3) وَمَا يُدۡرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُۥ يَزَّكَّىٰٓ ۝٣

That is, when will you realise, O scowler, that perhaps the blind man will cleanse himself with righteous deeds, when to turn from him would be a sin, as from a pure and righteous one.

Or being reminded, and the reminder benefit him. (4) أَوۡ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنفَعَهُ ٱلذِّكۡرَىٰٓ ۝٤

That is, being reminded by admonishments and guidance, and that he would benefit from being reminded. The difference between this and the previous verse is that there the purification originated within himself, here the purification is through being reminded.

But as for him who is rich, (5) أَمَّا مَنِ ٱسۡتَغۡنَىٰ ۝٥

Rich, with much property and wealth. The word used is *istighnā*, essentially meaning to seek wealth.

So thou attend to him; (6) فَأَنتَ لَهُۥ تَصَدَّىٰ ۝٦

You, O scowler, turn to him and do not mind being near him and talking to him, whatever his ethical condition. For:

And thou feel not burdened that he does not become purified? (7) وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّىٰ ﴿٧﴾

That is; O scowler, you do not care whether he is pure and righteous or not, for it is wealth that is great in your eyes, not the religion. That is why you care nothing for religion when with a person of wealth.

But whosoever comes to thee striving, (8) وَأَمَّا مَن جَآءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

That is, striving for the sake of goodness and personal growth, like Ibn Umm Maktūm.

And he is in awe, (9) وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

That is, he fears Allah, grand and magnificent.

Then, thou distract thyself from him! (10) فَأَنتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

You, O scowler, pay him no heed and divert yourself to another, simply because he is poor and needy.

Nay, indeed it is a reminder (11) كَلَّآ إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ﴿١١﴾

Nay, it is not as you suppose, O scowler! … that wealth is better than the religion. Indeed it, these āyāt, is a reminder; reminding of the knowledge of the good and the obscene latent in human nature and the soul.

- So whosoever wills recalls it - (12) فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ ﴿١٢﴾

That is, whoever wills goodness and salvation shall remember what has been placed in their nature and their souls, so that they act according to the moral admonition, advice, and guidance.

In honoured scrolls, (13) فِى صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ ﴿١٣﴾

That is, this reminder exists in honoured scrolls, kept by Allah, glory be to Him. What is meant by ‘scrolls’ *(ṣuḥuf)* is the 'protected tablet' *(al-lawḥ al-maḥfūdh)* and the other tablets that exist at the highest level *(al-mala’ al-aᶜla).*

Exalted, purified, (14) مَّرۡفُوعَةٖ مُّطَهَّرَةِۭ ﴿١٤﴾

Exalted (*marfūᶜah*): in the skies, physically; or, metaphorically, in magnificence and glory. Purified: unblemished by faults, shortcomings and suchlike.

By the hands of scribes, (15) بِأَيۡدِي سَفَرَةٖ ﴿١٥﴾

That is, the scrolls are written by the noble angels.

Munificent, righteous. (16) كِرَامِۭ بَرَرَةٖ ﴿١٦﴾

Angels of lofty station, doers of goodness.

The thread then turns to one of outraged amazement at the disbelievers, and at how they continue to disbelieve in this magnificent book, sent down from Allah, glory be to Him, the Creator in whose hands are the reins of all things:

May man be killed! How he disbelieves! (17) قُتِلَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ مَآ أَكۡفَرَهُۥ ﴿١٧﴾

May man be killed! an invocation against him. It is the category of man who is astray whom is meant, as is clear from the words 'How he disbelieves!' The tone is one of indignation at man's disbelief and straying, even when the evidence is fully laid before him, and the argument is complete.

From which thing did He create him? (18) مِنۡ أَيِّ شَيۡءٍ خَلَقَهُۥ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, does man not look at the beginning of his creation, at how the Most High created him from a contemptible liquid? And then made of him the precise, sensitive, able and dextrous marvel that he is?

From a drop He created him, then He determined him, (19) مِن نُّطۡفَةٍ خَلَقَهُۥ فَقَدَّرَهُۥ ﴿١٩﴾

That is, from a drop of semen He created him. Then He fashioned him: He determined his qualities and his characteristics; his senses, his powers of perception, his physical endowments, his capabilities, his quantity, his quality, his length and his breadth and so on.

And then the path: He eases for him; (20) ثُمَّ ٱلسَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُۥ ﴿٢٠﴾

That is, He eases the path of life for him, in that He prepares his needs for him, and guides him to what is good for him and towards his felicity.

Thereupon He makes him die, and has him buried. (21) ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُۥ فَأَقْبَرَهُۥ ﴿٢١﴾

Then, after man's period on the earth draws to its conclusion, He makes him die. That is, He takes out his soul. And He 'has him buried'; this is the place where his body is contained after death, even if it be at sea or suchlike.

Thereupon, when He wills, He disperses him. (22) ثُمَّ إِذَا شَآءَ أَنشَرَهُۥ ﴿٢٢﴾

That is, when He, glory be to Him, wills the resurrection, He raises him alive perfectly.

Does he see himself prepared for the rising and ready to face that awesome day through his belief and good deeds?

Nay, he has not yet consummated what He commanded him! (23) كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَآ أَمَرَهُۥ ﴿٢٣﴾

That is, nay, for he is inattentive and lethargic. He has not yet carried out what Allah ordered him to do, in terms of belief and good deeds.

The thread then turns to remind man of some of the signs in creation, as evidence of His existence, glory be to Him – beginning with signs within himself and then listing some 'signs of the horizon'.

So the human should regard his food: (24) فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ ﴿٢٤﴾

That is, he should consider the origin of its creation, and who created it, and thus be better able to control his transgression and deviations.

Indeed We made the water gush forth in a gush, (25) أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا ٱلْمَآءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾

That is, Allah made the water descend from the sky in abundance.

Then We split the earth with splits, (26) ثُمَّ شَقَقۡنَا ٱلۡأَرۡضَ شَقّٗا ٢٦

That is, Allah split the earth with the growth of plants from it. With splits, so that the tiny, feeble plants can grow out of solid ground.

Then We make grains grow therein, (27) فَأَنۢبَتۡنَا فِيهَا حَبّٗا ٢٧

That is, in the earth grains are made to grow, like wheat and barley and suchlike.

And grapes and clover, (28) وَعِنَبٗا وَقَضۡبٗا ٢٨

Grapes are mentioned in particular owing to their abundance delicious nature and their numerous benefits. Clover is given for *qadb*, which means the lush tall greenery that is cut time and again and used for animal feed.

And olives and date palms, (29) وَزَيۡتُونٗا وَنَخۡلٗا ٢٩

The meaning is clear.

And gardens, richly gardened, (30) وَحَدَآئِقَ غُلۡبٗا ٣٠

'Gardens' is given for *ḥadā'iq*, meaning gardens enclosed by a wall, or small gardens with trees and flowers. Richly gardened is given for *ghulb*, meaning huge gardens with densely massed trees. The word suggests a garden dominated by tall trees seeking to benefit from the air and light.

And fruits and herbage; (31) وَفَٰكِهَةٗ وَأَبّٗا ٣١

Herbage: pasture or grasslands grazed by animals.

As provision for ye and for your livestock. (32) مَّتَٰعٗا لَّكُمۡ وَلِأَنۡعَٰمِكُمۡ ٣٢

That is, all has been made to grow for man's benefit and his livelihood.

The flow then turns from the issue of the Origin to the Return, with the Most High's word:

So when comes the roar, (33) فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ ٱلصَّآخَّةُ ﴿٣٣﴾

‘The roar’ is given for *al-ṣākhkhah*, which is one of the names of the resurrection, for it shall ring in people's ears, as its noises are severe, like the trumpet, the sound of the fire, the voices of the angels, and suchlike. The consequent is not given, that mankind shall be in two groups on that day, for it is clear from the passage beginning with His word ‘*Faces....*’

The day when a man flees from his brother, (34) يَوۡمَ يَفِرُّ ٱلۡمَرۡءُ مِنۡ أَخِيهِ ﴿٣٤﴾

That is, everyone shall flee from one another, fearing to be afflicted by them, in that they ask for something, or affect them with their consequences.

And his mother and his father, (35) وَأُمِّهِۦ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿٣٥﴾

That is, he will flee from them in fear that he has been neglectful of their rights; or in fear that they will seek something from him.

And his wife and his sons, (36) وَصَٰحِبَتِهِۦ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿٣٦﴾

Wife is given as an example, for otherwise a wife will also flee from her husband. The meaning is that everyone will want nothing to do with even their most beloved relatives and relations.

Every one of them that day has a circumstance sufficing him: (37) لِكُلِّ ٱمۡرِيٕٖ مِّنۡهُمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٖ شَأۡنٞ يُغۡنِيهِ ﴿٣٧﴾

‘Circumstance’ is given for *sha’nun*. It means that for all of those who flee, or for everyone present at the resurrection, is a grand affair and enough concern that suffices him, in that it totally occupies him to the exclusion of the affairs of others. He will be concerned with his own account, which will prevent him from giving importance to the others.

Faces that day are bright, (38) وُجُوهٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ مُّسۡفِرَةٞ ﴿٣٨﴾

‘Bright’ (*musfirah*): radiant, glowing; and they are the faces of the believers, for joy and glee will appear on their faces.

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

Laughing, rejoicing; (39)

Laughing in delight, rejoicing at the goodness, the reward.

وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

And faces that day have a dust upon them, (40)

On the day of resurrection the disbelievers' faces will have a 'dust' upon them. That is, they shall be covered in sorrow, grief and distress.

تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ﴿٤١﴾

Overspread by smokiness. (41)

Their faces that day will be mounted by a dark smokiness, which word is given for *qatarah*, meaning the darkness of smoke. This smoke and dust and melancholy will all settle on their faces, and the satisfaction of Allah and His mercy will not clean them, as He cleans the faces of the believer – if we assume that the believers pass through the smoky stages of the resurrection.

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْكَفَرَةُ ٱلْفَجَرَةُ ﴿٤٢﴾

Those, they are the disbelievers, the brazen. (42)

Those described with such evil characteristics, they are the disbelievers, who are brazen and shameless in disobedience. It is the disbelievers and the brazen whose faces will be covered with a film of dust and smoke.

Surah al-Takwīr (81)
'The Rolling-Up'

سورة التكوير

The surah has been given its name from the prominence of the verb it contains derived from the infinitive *al-takwīr*, meaning 'to roll up'. Like the other Makkan surahs this surah deals with the three major principles of faith. As Surah *ᶜAbasa* concluded with an account of the resurrection, so this surah begins with an account of its characteristics.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... Beginning in the name of He who is the originator of all things, for from Him, glory be to Him, is the whole of existence, and towards Him is the progression of creation.

The Compassionate, the Merciful towards all things: in creating, nurturing and beneficence.

When the sun is rolled up, (1)

إِذَا ٱلشَّمۡسُ كُوِّرَتۡ ﴿١﴾

That is, when its light ceases and it becomes dark. Rolled up is given for *kūwwirat* which implies that its light will be rolled up, and its extension towards the horizons will go, and it will become black and dark.

And when the stars become dingy, (2)

وَإِذَا ٱلنُّجُومُ ٱنكَدَرَتۡ ﴿٢﴾

Their light and brightness will also fade.

And when the mountains are set in motion, (3)

وَإِذَا ٱلۡجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتۡ ﴿٣﴾

Allah will pluck them from their places and despatch them as dust through the atmosphere.

And when the pregnant camels are abandoned, (4)

وَإِذَا ٱلۡعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتۡ ﴿٤﴾

'Pregnant camels' is given for *al-ᶜishār*, meaning she-camels that are big with young, and the she-camels whose period is completed and are about to enter labour. 'Neglected' is given for *ᶜuṭṭilat*, meaning left untended, with no

herdsman or guard. The signification is that the dread of that day will be such that it will cause man to overlook his most valued possessions.

And when the beasts are assembled, (5) وَإِذَا ٱلْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ۝٥

'Beasts' is given for *wuḥush*, meaning wild animals that are free and have not been domesticated; or perhaps all animals. They will be assembled that day for the retribution of the wronged amongst them against those who wronged them.

And when the seas are blazed, (6) وَإِذَا ٱلْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ۝٦

The seas shall be transformed into fire, as an oven is fired up and blazed.

And when the souls are paired, (7) وَإِذَا ٱلنُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ ۝٧

Each person will be linked to whoever is similar to him, the believer with the believer, the disbeliever with the disbeliever. Or the believing souls will be coupled with 'the beauties of Paradise' *(ḥūr al-ᶜayn)*, while the disbelievers are coupled with devils (*shayāṭīn*). Or the believers will be reunited with their dear ones after having been separated from them at the time of death.

And when the girl buried alive is asked, (8) وَإِذَا ٱلْمَوْءُۥدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ۝٨

The Arabs would bury alive their daughters from fear of poverty and dishonour.

For what crime she was killed? (9) بِأَيِّ ذَنۢبٍ قُتِلَتْ ۝٩

That is, those who buried alive their daughters will be asked for what crime committed by their daughters did they kill them, as they were innocent and had committed no crime.

And when the scrolls are dispersed, (10) وَإِذَا ٱلصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ۝١٠

The records of people's actions will be opened for each to read his account and be informed of the good and the bad it contains, so as to be recompensed and requited for what he has done.

And when the sky is ripped away, (11) وَإِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ كُشِطَتۡ ﴿١١﴾

'Ripped away' is given for *kushiṭat*, meaning plucked out with violence; as if the sky is a skin that will be ripped away from the world of existence. This signifies the catastrophic change of the order the universe so that man will see the sky other than the sky, just as he sees a body with its skin ripped off other than in its previous form.

And when the Inferno is fired up, (12) وَإِذَا ٱلۡجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتۡ ﴿١٢﴾

The fire of hell will be fired up; its blaze will be increased so that its heat and its terror will be intensified.

And when the Paradise is brought near, (13) وَإِذَا ٱلۡجَنَّةُ أُزۡلِفَتۡ ﴿١٣﴾

As if the paradise is distant in space and is then made to descend to the ground where the resurrection has taken place and humankind are standing. Or what is meant is its proximity to the believers in time.

A soul will know what it has presented. (14) عَلِمَتۡ نَفۡسٞ مَّآ أَحۡضَرَتۡ ﴿١٤﴾

When these things happen everyone will know their actions they have performed in the world, their good deeds and their evil works, and the felicity and the misery they have prepared for the day of resurrection. They will know the actions they have done, for they will be requited for them.

The thread then turns to the affirmation of the issue of prophethood, and to explain that the Qur'an is not the word of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, in contrast to what was supposed by the disbelievers:

So I swear not by the vanishers, (15) فَلَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِٱلۡخُنَّسِ ﴿١٥﴾

It has been explained that the word 'not' (*la*) is for negation. Yet it is used to denote respect and honour for what follows, to magnify the oath and hint at it but without the oath actually taking place. 'The vanishers' is given for *al-khunnas*, meaning something that disappears and reappears, and what are meant are the planets. Thus the verse reads: So I swear not by the planets that disappear when they set, or as the sky gives way to daylight.

The coursers, the disappearers, (16) ٱلْجَوَارِ ٱلْكُنَّسِ ﴿١٦﴾

'Coursers' is given for *jawār*, the plural of *jāriya*, meaning something that is in motion. The planets appear to move through the sky. 'Disappearers' is given for *kunnas*, the plural of *kānis*, meaning something that conceals itself in its place, like a gazelle conceals itself in its home. So it reads 'I swear not by the planets in motion that return to their heavenly station and run their orbit and then conceal themselves in their places.' For in the beginning of the night one sees the planets have returned from their concealment, then he sees their movement and thereafter their disappearance.

And the night when it swarms, (17) وَٱلَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ ﴿١٧﴾

'swarms' is used for the word " *ᶜasᶜas*", which is used for the time of night when it is not quite dark yet, i.e. when night approaches after sunset, as well as when it begins to depart before sunrise.

And the morning when it breathes, (18) وَٱلصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, when the morning approaches and daylight breaks.

Then comes the consequent of these vows, in His word:

Indeed it is the word of a noble messenger, (19) إِنَّهُۥ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١٩﴾

That is, this noble Qur'an is the word of a noble messenger, whom is meant is Jabrāʾīl or the archangel Gabriel, *peace be upon him*, as opposed to it being the invention of the Prophet, as supposed by the disbelievers. That it is the word of Gabriel is meant to indicate that it is from Allah, glory be to Him, not that it is Gabriel's own word, as is clear.

Powerful in the sight of The Enthroned One, of high station, (20) ذِى قُوَّةٍ عِندَ ذِى ٱلْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

Descriptions of Jabrāʾīl or Gabriel: possessor of strength that is both physical and intellectual, for he is able to come down from the skies to the earth and deliver the message of Allah to the Prophet perfectly, with no additions and no omissions; and he has a great station with the Holder of the Trellis (*al-ᶜarsh*)

who is Allah, Owner of the whole of existence. He is firmly alongside the Holder of the Trellis in the sense of having prestige.

Obeyed there, trusty. (21) مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

The angels obey archangel Gabriel up there, because of the greatness of his rank. 'There' is given for *thamma,* which means up there in the lofty station (*al-mala' al-a*[c]*la*). He is 'trusty' (*amīn*) in that he was entrusted with the revelation, and neither erred with too little nor with too much.

The Qur'an is therefore the word of Allah, exalted be He. As for the Messenger:

And your companion is not mad, (22) وَمَا صَاحِبُكُم بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

The address is to the disbelievers. That their companion, the Messenger of God, who lived amongst them, is not mad; he has not lost his reason, as the disbelievers said of him.

And indeed he saw him on the clear horizon, (23) وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ بِٱلْأُفُقِ ٱلْمُبِينِ ﴿٢٣﴾

That is, the Messenger of Allah saw Gabriel in an easterly direction on a clear horizon. It was not imaginary and not implanted within him by jinn, or suchlike, as they supposed.

And he is not begrudging of the unseen, (24) وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى ٱلْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

The Prophet, *may Allah bless him and his family*, is not grudging of the unseen (*al-ghaib*), by which is meant the revelation of Allah, glory be to Him. 'Begrudge' is given for *ḍanīn*, meaning to suspect; i.e. to lie, or to be stingy.

And it is not the word of an outcast devil, (25) وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَٰنٍ رَّجِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

The Qur'an is not the word of a cast-out *shayṭān* who has been stoned or bombarded with curses, like those 'prophecies' that are the words of devils received by witches, soothsayers, fortune-tellers and the like.

So where go ye? (26) فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

O disbelievers? How is it you do not believe when the Qur'an is its own honest evidence? For it is not the word of a madman, and not the word of a devil, and it is not that it has additions or shortcomings due to the Prophet being niggardly in presenting the revelation completely. It is from its sender, Allah, and from he to whom it was sent, the Prophet. The best book of guidance. How is it, then, that you will not believe?

It is nought but a reminder for the worlds; (27)

إِنۡ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكۡرٞ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢٧

The Qur'an is not but a reminder for all peoples and all worlds, the world of men and the world of jinn, reminding them of what has been placed in their natures about the Divinity and existence of Allah, the message, the return, righteous ethics and so forth.

For whosoever among ye wills to be straight; (28)

لِمَن شَآءَ مِنكُمۡ أَن يَسۡتَقِيمَ ٢٨

That is, be straight in your beliefs and your actions, without deviating to right or left. Those who will are singled out in particular as it is they who will benefit from the reminder, just as it might be said to a class, 'This is the teacher for whoever wishes to learn from him,' meaning whoever wishes to take benefit from him, whereas he is there to teach them all.

But ye will it not save that Allah wills it, Lord of the worlds. (29)

وَمَا تَشَآءُونَ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢٩

That is, you do not will to be straight unless Allah wills it, for man is unable to be guided except after the will of Allah in His setting up the proofs, which He, glory be to Him, certainly wills. For He dispatched the Prophet and sent down the Book, so that all that remains is the will of man to accept the guidance and follow the path. In this there is an incitement for the servants to form the will, for clearly Allah, glory be to Him, wills it. Is it fit and proper, therefore, for man not to will it?

Surah al-Infiṭār (82) 'Bursting Open'

سورة الإنفطار

The surah derives its name from the prominence of a verb from the infinitive *al-infiṭār*, meaning to be torn apart. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the principal matters of faith. Just as Surah al-Takwīr explained conditions of the resurrection, so this surah emphasizes the same.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... We begin the surah in the name of Allah to whom belong all things. For verily Allah is a name for that essence that comprises all the attributes of perfection.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who blesses His servants with what completes all their deficiencies.

When the sky is burst open, (1)

إِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ ٱنفَطَرَتۡ ﴿١﴾

That is, it will be split open and the marks of it having been torn will become apparent, so that man will see it like a ruined wall with massive cracks.

And when the stars are scattered, (2)

وَإِذَا ٱلۡكَوَاكِبُ ٱنتَثَرَتۡ ﴿٢﴾

That is, the stars will collapse and depart from their places and the present celestial order will become void.

And when the seas are burst forth, (3)

وَإِذَا ٱلۡبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتۡ ﴿٣﴾

That is, the seas shall burst forth like a gushing well, with boiling water or fire.

And when the graves are turned, (4)

وَإِذَا ٱلۡقُبُورُ بُعۡثِرَتۡ ﴿٤﴾

That is, the earth in them will be overturned in order for the bodies to leave them.

When all this happens, the resurrection will have arrived and ...

A soul will know what it sent ahead and sent later. (5)

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ ۝٥

Every soul – for by the unarticled singular is meant the species – will know from reading the account of his deeds what he sent to the afterlife while he was alive in the world, and what was sent to the afterlife by him after his death: acts of perpetual charity and books of knowledge and religion, or things that are perpetually harmful and so forth. He will know all this so as to be recompensed according to how he acted; if good then good but if bad then bad.

The thread then turns to awaken man from his slumber, with His word:

O thou the human! What has deluded thee as to thy Lord, the Munificent? (6)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ ٱلْكَرِيمِ ۝٦

That is, what has deceived you with respect to your Lord that you disobey and oppose Him, feeling safe against His punishments and chastisement? Is it just for you to meet His generosity with disobedience? Is the return of goodness not goodness?

It is narrated that when the Prophet recited this verse, he would say: 'His ignorance (has beguiled him).'

He who created thee, then fashioned thee, then justified thee; (7)

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّىٰكَ فَعَدَلَكَ ۝٧

That is, Allah Almighty originated you as sperm, then made your faculties and organs all ready to seek their advantages, and then perfected your symmetry between your bodily parts, like the two eyes, two hands, two legs and so forth, with no incongruities such as one of a pair large and the other small, and so on.

Into whichever form, as He wills He fits thee. (8)

فِىٓ أَىِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَآءَ رَكَّبَكَ ۝٨

'As' is given for *mā*, used here to emphasize the differences of form. The meaning is that He creates us in whatever form He wills: attractive, unattractive, beautiful, ugly and so on. For Allah, glory be to Him, assembles from the simple elements of flesh, bone, blood and so on the particular form of every human being.

So do you deny, after all this, the existence of Allah, or His ability to raise the dead?

Nay, but ye belie the requital, (9) كَلَّا بَلۡ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِٱلدِّينِ ۝٩

Nay, things are not as you suppose. Yet you do not believe in the requital, but call it a lie.

And verily over ye there are minders: (10) وَإِنَّ عَلَيۡكُمۡ لَحَـٰفِظِينَ ۝١٠

You imagine there is no reckoning, though indeed over you, O people, are angels who keep your deeds in their writings and their records for you to be recompensed according to them on the day of resurrection.

Scribes munificent, (11) كِرَامٗا كَـٰتِبِينَ ۝١١

That is, the said angels are of a high and lofty station, and are recording the deeds of the sons of Adam. *Nothing eludes their account, for:*

They know what ye do. (12) يَعۡلَمُونَ مَا تَفۡعَلُونَ ۝١٢

That is, the good things, the bad things, the instances of obedience and the instances of disobedience, all is known to them.

And on the day of resurrection everyone will be requited according to what they have done:

Indeed the righteous are in bliss, (13) إِنَّ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٖ ۝١٣

'The righteous' is given for *al-abrār*, meaning those who are good in belief and in action. They shall be in gardens with all their luxuries and delights.

And indeed the brazen are in the blazing fire; (14) وَإِنَّ ٱلۡفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٖ ۝١٤

'The brazen' is given for *al-fujjār*, meaning those who act in disobedience, whether in disbelief or otherwise. 'Blazing fire' is given for *jaḥīm*, one of the names of Hell.

They burn in it on the day of requital, (15) يَصۡلَوۡنَهَا يَوۡمَ ٱلدِّينِ ۝١٥

That is, on the day of resurrection.

And they will not be absent from it. (16)

وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَآئِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

The brazen will not be absent from the fire, rather they will be in it constantly without interruption.

Having given a reminder of the day of resurrection, the thread turns to excite dread of it:

And what will make thee comprehend what is the day of requital? (17)

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا يَوْمُ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿١٧﴾

What, O thou the human, will make you understand what it is? For man does not understand its gravity, its terrifying nature; until, that is, they see it with their eyes.

Again, what will make thee comprehend what is the day of requital? (18)

ثُمَّ مَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا يَوْمُ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿١٨﴾

‘Again’ is given for *thumma*, used here to facilitate literary order, and to increase the sense of dread.

The day when no soul shall own a thing for another soul, and the affair on that day is Allah’s. (19)

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَٱلْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلَّهِ ﴿١٩﴾

No one that day shall be able to defend any other, nor save him by any means. All control that day will be in the hand of Allah, and nothing will benefit a man except the actions performed for Allah, the Most High.

Surah al-Muṭaffifin (83) 'The Short-Sellers'

سورة المطففين

The surah has been given its name due to the prominence of the word *al-muṭaffifin*, meaning the defrauders. It seems that the surah is composed of Makkan and Madinan āyāt, as it contains references to the Islamic order as well as to matters of belief. Just as Surah al-Infiṭār concluded with an account of the resurrection and of humankind's conditions thereupon, so this surah has a similar content.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... Beginning by the name of Him to whom belongs the dominion, and who is the First of all things; for what is more worthy than beginning by the name of the Generous?

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. who in His mercy blesses the servants and completes the deficiencies of every person.

Woe to the short-sellers, (1)

وَيۡلٞ لِّلۡمُطَفِّفِينَ ١

'Woe' (*wayl*) signifies an evil condition, while 'short-sellers' is given for *muṭaffifin*, meaning those who give short measure in weight or in volume. Thus the verse means that there is an evil condition for those who give short measure.

Then Allah, glory be to Him, clarifies the muṭaffifin as follows ...

Who, when they take measure from people, take it in full, (2)

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَا ٱكۡتَالُواْ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ يَسۡتَوۡفُونَ ٢

That is, when they take measure of people's goods which they want for themselves, like paying money so as to purchase some wheat, for example, they make sure they take the correct measure which is their right. And since measuring by weight and measuring by volume are in essence the same, the mention of one serves the purpose of mentioning the other.

But when they measure out for them, or weigh for them, they give loss. (3)

وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمۡ أَو وَّزَنُوهُمۡ يُخۡسِرُونَ ٣

When they wish to sell a weight of wheat to people and take its price in return, they give less than the weight they are supposed to give. It is clear that the transaction is not forbidden in itself, but it is loathsome to give less, just as it is not forbidden to praise people to their faces, though when it is coupled with criticizing them behind their backs it becomes ugly and loathsome indeed. Such a person is called two-tongued (*dhā lisānayn*), and on the day of resurrection will have two tongues of fire, as is recorded in the narrations.

The thread then turns to warn them, with His word:

Do they not suppose that they will be raised (4)

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ أَنَّهُم مَّبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٤﴾

‘They ...suppose’ is given for *yadhunnu*, indicating that even the supposition of such a day is enough to lead a person to abstain from such a vice; how much more, then, when a person has knowledge?

For a tremendous day? (5)

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥﴾

The tremendous day (*yawm al-^{c}adhīm*) is the day of resurrection, when every person will face the reckoning of his actions.

The day when mankind stands for the Lord of the worlds. (6)

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ ٱلنَّاسُ لِرَبِّ ٱلْعَـٰلَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

They will stand from the graves for Allah's reckoning and His recompense.

Nay, indeed the book of the brazen is in ‘eternal prison’; (7)

كَلَّآ إِنَّ كِتَـٰبَ ٱلْفُجَّارِ لَفِى سِجِّينٍ ﴿٧﴾

That is, nay, the affair is not as they claim it to be, with no reckoning and no recompense, but that each person will there receive the recompense of his actions. ‘The brazen’ is given for *al-fujjār*, those who are disobedient towards God, be it through disbelief or through sin. What is meant by their book is the register of their names and their particulars. ‘Eternal prison’ is given for *al-sijjīn*. It means that Allah has prepared for them an eternal prison. Saying their book is in an eternal prison is because that is where they shall be, like saying of someone that his book is amongst the criminals, when what is meant is that he is counted as a criminal.

And what will make thee comprehend what is ‘eternal prison’? (8)

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ ﴿٨﴾

The thread has changed to incite dread of the eternal prison. The address is in the singular, so it is directed at each individual, or at the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.*

كِتَٰبٞ مَّرۡقُومٞ ﴿٩﴾

A book inscribed. (9)

The book is inscribed, written down and complete; it cannot be substituted and it cannot be altered. No brazen one can have his name removed from it and recorded in the book of the righteous.

وَيۡلٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

Woe that day to the beliers, (10)

Woe to them, that is, on the day of resurrection.

These persons who say that the truth is a lie are then defined, in His word:

ٱلَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوۡمِ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿١١﴾

Those who belie the day of requital; (11)

That is, the day of resurrection. 'Requital' is given for *dīn*, meaning recompense; while belying the resurrection entails belying the other principles of faith.

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِۦٓ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعۡتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾

And none belie it but every sinful aggressor: (12)

An aggressor (*muʿtad*) is someone who is unjust and exceeds the limits; sinful (*athīm*) is a person who is profligate in sin and here denotes a person excessive in transgression.

إِذَا تُتۡلَىٰ عَلَيۡهِ ءَايَٰتُنَا قَالَ أَسَٰطِيرُ ٱلۡأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

When Our signs are recited to him he says: 'Fables of the ancients'. (13)

That is, when such a transgressor is presented proofs of the Divinity and of the Divine oneness and the other principles of belief – or perhaps by signs (*āyāt*) are meant the portents of the sacred Qur'an – he calls them mere fictitious stories of the ancient, less sophisticated people. Today they call religion 'reactionary', another term for 'fables of the ancients'.

كَلَّاۖ بَلۡۜ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُواْ يَكۡسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

Nay, but what they were earning has prevailed over their hearts; (14)

Nay, the signs are not fictitious fables, but rather their hearts have been overcome by the effect of their sins and offences, and their disobedience has caused their hearts to harden and to turn to stone. Thus they see the truth only as false, and the signs or āyāt as fables. Imām al-Ṣādiq has said: 'The heart tends to become rusty, so when you remind it of Allah, it is polished.'

Nay, indeed that day they are veiled from their Lord. (15) كَلَّآ إِنَّهُمۡ عَن رَّبِّهِمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لَّمَحۡجُوبُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

Nay, they will not remain in goodness and comfort forever, though the disbelievers imagine they will be blessed with the beneficence and grace of Allah there too, saying *'And if I am returned to my Lord I will certainly find better than this as a place of return.'* [18: 36] But on the day of resurrection they shall find themselves concealed from, hindered and prevented from, the grace and mercy of their Lord.

Then indeed they burn in the inferno; (16) ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمۡ لَصَالُواْ ٱلۡجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦﴾

After being denied the grace and kindness of Allah, they will be thrust into the fire, and shall remain there.

Then it is said, 'This is what ye used to belie.' (17) ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَٰذَا ٱلَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِۦ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Once they have entered the raging fire they will be rebuked and censured with the words given. This means the punishment they taste. They called it a lie while they were in the world, for they said that there is no paradise, no fire, no account and no requital.

Nay, the book of the righteous is in 'far heights'; (18) كَلَّآ إِنَّ كِتَٰبَ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ ﴿١٨﴾

Nay, things are not as they claimed, in that they claimed themselves to be blessed with the Divine favour, for the Divine favour is for the righteous (*abrār*), meaning those whose beliefs and deeds are excellent. Their book – in which their names are recorded and their lofty stations specified – is on the far heights (*ᶜilliyyīn*), for it is written in their record that that is their station.

The argument then turns to magnify their station, in His word:

And what will make thee comprehend what are 'far heights?' (19) وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ ﴿١٩﴾

The address is to the individual human being, or perhaps to the Messenger.

A book inscribed, (20) كِتَـٰبٌ مَّرۡقُومٌ ٢٠

The book is inscribed and recorded and the name of the righteous will not be erased from it.

Witnessed by those brought near. (21) يَشۡهَدُهُ ٱلۡمُقَرَّبُونَ ٢١

The book is known and its value appreciated by the elite angels who are brought nearest to Allah, glory be to Him. This is another merit and honour for the righteous, for man would like the people to see his good deeds and achievements.

The thread then turns to specify the condition of the righteous whose books state that they are in the far heights:

Indeed the righteous are in bliss, (22) إِنَّ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ٢٢

They are in luxury and enjoyment.

On couches gazing, (23) عَلَى ٱلۡأَرَآئِكِ يَنظُرُونَ ٢٣

'Couches' is given for *arā'ik*, meaning the seats luxuriously prepared for a bride to sit on. Gazing means looking about this way and that, taking enjoyment from their sight just as they take enjoyment from their other senses.

Thou know in their faces the radiance of bliss; (24) تَعۡرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمۡ نَضۡرَةَ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ٢٤

When a person is in bliss and ease there appears on his face brightness and radiance.

They are given to drink of a nectar, sealed, (25) يُسۡقَوۡنَ مِن رَّحِيقٖ مَّخۡتُومٍ ٢٥

Those who bear them their drinks are the angels, by His command, glory be to Him. 'Nectar' is given for *raḥīq* which is a drink pure of all impurity and blemish. Sealed, so that nothing can affect it from without, just as drinks and preserves are sealed in cans in the world.

Its sealing is with musk, so for that the contenders should contend; (26)	خِتَـٰمُهُۥ مِسْكٌ ۚ وَفِى ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ ٱلْمُتَنَـٰفِسُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

The substance of the seal is musk; this is mentioned for encouragement and to show the extent of the comforts and bliss awaiting the righteous. It is for that bliss that those who strive should strive – in undertaking the obedience to Allah, glory be to Him. 'Contend' is given for *tanāfus*, meaning to compete for something, for the bliss of paradise is worthy of being competed for by mankind, in that everyone set out to perform the good actions so as to attain to that bliss, rather than contending over the bounties of the world, which are temporal.

And its admixture is from Tasnim, (27)	وَمِزَاجُهُۥ مِن تَسْنِيمٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

The nectar is mixed with the pure water of the spring or fountainhead called Tasnīm, which is given its name on account of it being so high, from *sanama* meaning to be high.

A spring from which drink those brought near. (28)	عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا ٱلْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

Tasnīm is a spring for the refreshment of those who are near to the satisfaction and pleasure of Allah, the Most High, on account of their good deeds.

The thread then turns to explain that whatever is experienced there by the goodly and by the sinners is only the recompense of their actions:

Indeed the criminals used to laugh at those who believed, (29)	إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا۟ كَانُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يَضْحَكُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Those who sinned and offended in the world used to mock and scorn the believers.

And as they passed them they winked, (30)	وَإِذَا مَرُّوا۟ بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

That is, when the believers passed by them, the disbelievers would wink at each other and nod towards the believers mockingly. It is reported that Imām

Ali was amongst those whom the hypocrites would mock in this fashion, and accordingly there are narrations that explain the verse in this way, but this is a case of an application (*miṣdāq*) of a particular instance embodying its universal truth. [ref. Biḥār 8/114, 18/115, 18/172, 36/66, 39/260, 64/58. Ibn ^{c}Abbās is among those who report this event, and Sa^{c}id ibn Sa^{c}d al-Balkhi – a prominent Sunni scholar confirmed it.]

And when they returned to their folk they returned laughing, (31)

وَإِذَا ٱنقَلَبُوٓاْ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهِمُ ٱنقَلَبُواْ فَكِهِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

That is, when the guilty returned to their homes, they returned happy and merry from their having mocked the believers, as is always the way with the ignorant.

And when they saw them they said, 'Indeed, those are astray', (32)

وَإِذَا رَأَوۡهُمۡ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَضَآلُّونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

That is, when the disbelievers saw the believers they would say amongst themselves that the believers were astray, for having strayed from the path of worldly enjoyment for the sake of alleged bliss in the afterlife, and is it logical to exchange what exists for what is promised? Such were their words.

And they were sent not as minders over them; (33)

وَمَآ أُرۡسِلُواْ عَلَيۡهِمۡ حَٰفِظِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

That is, the disbelievers were not sent as guardians over the believers, to be concerned with their progress or their error.

So this day those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers, (34)

فَٱلۡيَوۡمَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنَ ٱلۡكُفَّارِ يَضۡحَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

That is, on the day of resurrection. A fitting requital after the disbelievers laughed at the believers in the world. For certain evil circumstances afflicting a person cause his opponent to laugh.

On couches gazing; (35)

عَلَى ٱلۡأَرَآئِكِ يَنظُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

On their luxurious seats the believers will be gazing at the disbelievers, while they tumble in the fire.

Here the tone becomes one of mockery towards the disbelievers in return for their mocking the believers:

Are the disbelievers rewarded for what they were doing? (36)	هَلۡ ثُوِّبَ ٱلۡكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُواْ يَفۡعَلُونَ ٣٦

Yes, they are rewarded, for they are tumbling in the fire.

Surah al-Inshiqāq (84) ‘The Rending Asunder’

سورة الإنشقاق

This surah owes its name to the prominence within it of a verb form derived from the infinitive *inshiqāq*, meaning to crumble. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with articles of faith. As Surah *al-Muṭaffifīn* concluded on the theme of the resurrection, this surah opens on the subject of its terrors.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... We seek help from the name of Allah, glory be to Him, that He be assistance for us in our affairs.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who in His mercy graces all things, just as He says, '*My mercy embraces all things*,' in the sense that He does for a thing whatever brings it from deficiency to perfection.

When the sky rends asunder, (1)

إِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ ٱنشَقَّتْ ﴿١﴾

That is, the sky shall tear apart and cleave asunder, like a dilapidated wall, and the marks of the sky's cleavage will become apparent to the eye. The stars will be scattered on account of the breakdown of the celestial order.

And listens to its Lord; and rightly so, (2)

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٢﴾

The sky listens, obeys, to its Lord, its Creator. And what is meant is that it is obedient to Allah, glory be to Him. ‘and rightly so’ is given for *ḥuqqat*, meaning that it is justified and appropriate for the sky to listen to its Lord and obey Him, in that it was created with the quality of obedience to its Lord's directives.

And when the earth is stretched, (3)

وَإِذَا ٱلْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ ﴿٣﴾

The mountains shall be crushed and the earth made level and smooth, with no unevenness.

And casts forth what is in it and becomes empty, (4)

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿٤﴾

What is within the earth will be cast out: its treasures, its minerals and the dead bodies buried within it. Nothing will remain within it and it shall be quite empty.

And listens to its Lord; and rightly so; (5) وَأَذِنَتۡ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتۡ ۝٥

The earth too obeys its Lord, who is Allah, glory be to Him, and it is right that it listens and obeys. The consequent of these vows is not explicitly given, for it is implicit. It is: mankind shall be divided into two groups, those who are saved and those for perdition. This is clear from the opening words of the eighth verse, '*So as for him ...*'

The thread of the surah *here directs itself to the human being, that he might prepare for that dreadful day:*

O thou humankind, indeed thou are striving towards thy Lord, striving, so thou shall meet Him: (6) يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدۡحٗا فَمُلَٰقِيهِ ۝٦

'Strive' is given for *kad-ḥ*, meaning to strive intensely. The striving is towards the Lord, that is, towards His reckoning and recompense, and it is hard and laborious. Man is continually engaged in a struggle in the earth that is dire and severe, for the world is a place of toil and drudgery, until it all ends with the account of Allah, glory be to Him. Our labours then meet Him, meaning that our actions and efforts will be recompensed, when we reach our Lord's reckoning.

So as for whosoever is given his book on his right, (7) فَأَمَّا مَنۡ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِيَمِينِهِۦ ۝٧

The book is the record written by the angels in which his deeds are registered. 'On his right' means in his right hand, which will be a sign of salvation and bliss.

He shall then be reckoned with, an easy reckoning, (8) فَسَوۡفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابٗا يَسِيرٗا ۝٨

His reckoning will be easy and present him no trouble. It seems the interval between being given the book and the reckoning is a lengthy one, as indicated by the word *sawfa*, given as 'then'.

And he will return to his folk joyfully; (9) وَيَنقَلِبُ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهِۦ مَسۡرُورٗا ﴿٩﴾

He will return from the place of the reckoning to his folk (*ahl*), meaning those who have faced the reckoning before him and are awaiting his return. Or the meaning is the houries - beauties of paradise (*ḥūr al-ᶜayn*) who have been prepared for him.

But as for whosoever is given his book behind his back, (10) وَأَمَّا مَنۡ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ وَرَآءَ ظَهۡرِهِۦ ﴿١٠﴾

That is, the angels will grab his left hand and pull it behind him and in that position will give him his book, to add to his extreme embarrassment and disgrace and to signify that he is for the fire and the chastisement.

He shall then cry for calamity, (11) فَسَوۡفَ يَدۡعُواْ ثُبُورٗا ﴿١١﴾

After he reads his book he will realise he is perished and will call for the fire to approach, for its time will have come.

And shall enter a blaze. (12) وَيَصۡلَىٰ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

That is, he enters the flaming, raging fire, and stays there.

Indeed among his folk he was joyful, (13) إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فِيٓ أَهۡلِهِۦ مَسۡرُورًا ﴿١٣﴾

The sinner amongst his own people in the world was joyful at the worldly bounties he enjoyed and gave no importance to the afterlife. This is in contrast to him who gives importance to the hereafter, who is sad on account of not knowing what will be done with him and what will be his final end.

Indeed he supposed he would never return; (14) إِنَّهُۥ ظَنَّ أَن لَّن يَحُورَ ﴿١٤﴾

While in the world he thought he would not return to life after death.

Nay! Indeed his Lord is over him an observer. (15) بَلَىٰٓۚ إِنَّ رَبَّهُۥ كَانَ بِهِۦ بَصِيرٗا ﴿١٥﴾

But no, he shall return. His Lord is watching his every action and will requite him for them, and He does not leave him vainly unregarded.

So I swear not by the evening redness, (16) فَلَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِٱلشَّفَقِ ١٦

The evening redness is the red afterglow of sunset. The oath is intended and hinted at but not sworn, to show the severity of the situation, as discussed previously.

And the night and what it gathers, (17) وَٱلَّيۡلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ١٧

That is, by the night and what it gathers. Nightfall gathers creatures and people together when during the day they are dispersed.

And the moon when it is complete, (18) وَٱلۡقَمَرِ إِذَا ٱتَّسَقَ ١٨

That is, when it is full and its radiance is complete.

Ye shall definitely mount state after state. (19) لَتَرۡكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٖ ١٩

That is, you shall witness and enter condition after condition. 'after' is given for ᶜ*an*, which denotes transition, in that man mounts one condition after passing through a previous condition. The verse means that man passes through his various stages and conditions until finally he arrives at the day of resurrection, as mentioned at the beginning of the surah, *"indeed thou are striving towards thy Lord"*. It is the consequent of the quasi-oath *'So I swear not by ...'*, and it seems that these āyāt are to show the vicissitudes of conditions in the world, so that humans are not deceived by the pleasant conditions in the world and forget the hereafter, thus losing both the world and the hereafter.

So what is with them that they believe not? (20) فَمَا لَهُمۡ لَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ ٢٠

As the world is temporal and finite, and as its conditions are not permanent, why do the disbelievers not believe in Allah so as to be saved from the chastisement of the hereafter, which is eternal? What is stopping them?

And when the Qur'an is recited to them, they prostrate not? (21) وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيۡهِمُ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانُ لَا يَسۡجُدُونَۤ۩ ٢١

That is, why is it they do not humble themselves before God after His signs are recited to them and the evidence is completed for them with the recitation of the Qur'an?

Rather those who disbelieve belie, (22)

بَلِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Instead of humbling themselves, the disbelievers call Allah and the Prophet and the day of resurrection false.

And Allah is more aware of what they harbour; (23)

وَٱللَّهُ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Allah knows better than anyone, even themselves, the evil intentions they hide away in their breasts.

So give them glad tidings of a painful chastisement; (24)

فَبَشِّرۡهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

The address is to the Prophet. 'Glad tidings' is given for *bishāra*, which is used here in mockery.

Save those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, theirs is a wage without end. (25)

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَهُمۡ أَجۡرٌ غَيۡرُ مَمۡنُونِۭ ﴿٢٥﴾

Those who believe in Allah, the Prophet and the hereafter and do good works, theirs is a reward that will not come to an end, for the blessings of the hereafter are permanent and without end.

Surah al-Burūj (85)
‘The Constellations’

سورة البروج

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-burūj* meaning the constellations of the stars. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. And just as Surah al-Inshiqāq concluded on the subject of the believers, this surah opens on the same topic.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning with the name of Allah, who is the originator of all things. None is more worthy of such a beginning than Him, that this beginning in speech may be paralleled in action.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. who bestows on the servants what they need, and blesses them with forgiveness for their sins.

By the sky, holder of the constellations, (1)

وَٱلسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ ٱلْبُرُوجِ ﴿١﴾

That is, an oath by the sky that bears the constellations: Aries, Taurus and the rest of the twelve constellations. The moon passes through each constellation in two and a half days, and the sun passes through each in a month.

And the promised day, (2)

وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْمَوْعُودِ ﴿٢﴾

That is, an oath by the promised day, that is, the day of resurrection, which has been promised to Allah's creatures.

And a witness and that witnessed, (3)

وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ ﴿٣﴾

Another oath, by the witness and the witnessed on that day, or by every witness and what is witnessed, which is closer to general import, though the commentaries give various meanings for this verse.

Killed be the companions of the trench! (4)

قُتِلَ أَصْحَـٰبُ ٱلْأُخْدُودِ ﴿٤﴾

That is, may Allah kill the disbelievers who dig trenches in the earth for the purpose of torturing the believers.

According to what has been narrated by Shaykh Qummi, he who stirred up the Abyssinians for war against the Yemen was their last king Dhu Nawās, who became Jewish and many of his tribe, Himyar, followed suit. He called himself Yusūf, and gathered a force of Jews with him.

Things continued thus for a while until he was informed that the remainder of the people were at Najrān following the religion of Jesus and ruled by the law of the Gospels. The leader of that religion was one ^{c}Abd-Allah ibn Buryas. Dhu Nawās' people urged him to go to them and oblige them to become Jews and assimilate them into Judaism. So they travelled to Najrān and there they gathered what Christians they found there and presented to them Judaism and proposed that they become Jews. The Christians refused and disputes took place, and he insisted they do so but they continued to refuse to become Jews, and opted to fight. So the Jews constructed a ditch for the Christians and placed within it firewood and set it ablaze. Some of the Christians were burned to death and some were killed by the sword, and all were treated the same till the number of those murdered reached some twenty thousand souls. One man escaped whose name was Daws.

The fire, holder of firewood, (5) ٱلنَّارِ ذَاتِ ٱلۡوَقُودِ ٥

The 'fire' stands for the trench, i.e. those who set up the fire that has colossal amount of firewood, so that the verse means 'the companions of the fire'. 'Holder of firewood' or, 'full of firewood', is given for *dhat al-wuqūd*, which is used to show the intensity of that fire.

While around it they sat, (6) إِذۡ هُمۡ عَلَيۡهَا قُعُودٞ ٦

'Around it' means around and about the fire. 'They' means the disbelievers. The disbelievers sat around the fire witnessing the believers being thrown into it.

And of what they did to the believers they were witnesses; (7) وَهُمۡ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفۡعَلُونَ بِٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ شُهُودٞ ٧

That disbelieving king and his followers were present and witnessed the persecution of the believers and their being thrown into the fire. This verse amounts to intensified rebuke of their pleasure and satisfaction at witnessing such evil persecution.

And they only took revenge on them for their believing in Allah, the Mighty, the Lauded, (8)

وَمَا نَقَمُوا۟ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ ٱلْعَزِيزِ ٱلْحَمِيدِ ﴿٨﴾

The king and his followers disliked nothing about the believers except that they believed in the message that was sent down to ^{c}Isa (Jesus), and renounced the invalid religion of the king. Allah is the Mighty (*al-^{c}Azīz*), dominant in His authority, the Lauded (*al-Ḥamīd*), single in His works, indicating that the believers triumphed even though the king survived freely for a while. What he did to the believers raised their station and benefited them.

To whom belongs the dominion of the skies and the earth, and Allah over all things is a witness. (9)

ٱلَّذِى لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٩﴾

Allah is the absolute owner of all things. He is present and aware; what was done to the believers did not escape Him and so He shall take their revenge.

Indeed those who persecute the believers and the believeresses and thereafter do not repent, so theirs is the chastisement of hell, and theirs is the chastisement of burning. (10)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا۟ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا۟ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ ٱلْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٠﴾

The reference is to that vicious king and his followers who persecuted the believers by torturing them and burning them alive. Thereafter they did not repent, by accepting the faith and being obedient, and so in the hereafter they faced the Divine punishments. It would seem that by the chastisement of hell is meant its other forms of chastisement, like the eating of pus and the poisonous bites and suchlike, for which reason the mention of the chastisement of the fire, or *ḥarīq*, a name of the fire, is added.

In contrast to these are the believers:

Indeed those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, theirs are the gardens under which rivers flow; that is the great achievement. (11)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّٰتٌ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْكَبِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

Those who believe in Allah and His Prophet and the Last Day, and do good deeds, theirs are gardens, their grounds concealed by trees and palaces. Under these trees and palaces rivers flow, rivers of milk and honey and wine and suchlike. That, the attainment of such delights, is the great achievement, than which no achievement is greater. In this verse and that above it is likely that the meaning of disbelievers and believers is a general one, and is not limited to the two sides of the affair of the burning trench, nor to the companions of the Prophet and his contemporaries.

Indeed the vengeance of thy Lord is severe; (12)

إِنَّ بَطۡشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾

The address is to the Prophet. By vengeance is meant His taking the disbelievers and punishing them for what they have done. It is severe, for when He assaults a person, the chastisement overcomes him in all its forms and degrees of intensity; so let the disbelievers and offenders beware of His mighty vengeance.

Indeed it is He who originates and returns; (13)

إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ يُبۡدِئُ وَيُعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾

He originates the creation by creating them from nothing and giving them life. And He makes them return alive after their death.

And He is the Forgiving, the Loving, (14)

وَهُوَ ٱلۡغَفُورُ ٱلۡوَدُودُ ﴿١٤﴾

He forgives those who repent and believe. 'Forgiving' is given for *ghafūr*, meaning exceedingly forgiving. He is the Loving (*al-Wadūd*), who loves mankind and wishes not to chastise them, but they persist in disbelief and sin.

Holder of the throne, the Glorious, (15)

ذُو ٱلۡعَرۡشِ ٱلۡمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

An allusion to all dominion being His. It is an expression to call a king 'holder of the throne' even if he never sits on a throne. The Glorious, [one of the Beautiful Names of Allah].

'Utmost doer' of what He wants. (16)

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾

'Utmost doer' is put for *faᶜāl*, a superlative noun derived from *faᶜala*, to do. Whatever thing He wants He does; nothing can deny Him. These portents

indicate the necessity of man's putting his hopes in Him, and fearing Him, for He has the absolute dominion and might.

The theme then turns to explain an instance of His doing what He wants, glory be to Him, for the believer to put his hopes in Him and the disbeliever to fear Him:

Has there come to thee the account of the armies, (17) هَلۡ أَتَىٰكَ حَدِيثُ ٱلۡجُنُودِ ﴿١٧﴾

O Messenger, or O listener, have you heard the account of those who mobilized against Allah, so as to wage war against His messengers? If so, then you know how Allah dealt with them.

Pharaoh and Thamud? (18) فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾

Pharaoh and his army, to whom Allah sent the prophet Moses; and Thamūd, to whom was sent the prophet Ṣāliḥ. For when these two peoples belied the Prophets, Allah glory be to Him, chastised them; such is Allah's method when dealing with those who belie the Prophets.

But the disbelievers of Makkah did not desist from their disbelief and sinful ways on account of these examples:

Nay, those who disbelieve are in belying; (19) بَلِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فِي تَكۡذِيبٖ ﴿١٩﴾

Those who disbelieve in Allah and the Prophet are engaged in calling Islam and the Qur'an false, turning their backs to the truth.

Yet Allah is around them, encompassing. (20) وَٱللَّهُ مِن وَرَآئِهِم مُّحِيطُۢ ﴿٢٠﴾

Since they are encircled by the encompassing knowledge of Allah, glory be to Him, and by His extensive power. He knows what they do, and they are in the grasp of His power.

It is not true that the Qur'an is poetry or divination or suchlike as the disbelievers were wont to say:

Nay, it is a glorious Qur'an, (21) بَلۡ هُوَ قُرۡءَانٞ مَّجِيدٞ ﴿٢١﴾

The Qur'an is glorious and magnificent, for it comes from Him, glory be to Him.

In a protected tablet. (22) فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

Protected, that is, from alteration and substitution. It is guarded and permanent, however much the disbelievers strive to annul it and cancel it out.

Surah al-Ṭāriq (86)
'The Nightcomer'

سورة الطارق

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *ṭāriq*, meaning 'night-visitor'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. And just as Surah al-Burūj concluded with a warning to those who belie the religion, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Opening in the name of Allah who comprehends all the qualities of perfection. The phrase is a symbol for the Muslim who speaks thus of Him at the outset of all his actions and his reposes, so as to take on its hue.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. It is a statement that He is a merciful God, and not harsh and cruel like some of the gods of the disbelievers, whom they described with the attributes of cruelty and spite.

By the sky and the nightcomer; (1)

وَٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلطَّارِقِ ﴿١﴾

An oath by the sky and by the visitor by night. 'Nightcomer' is given for *al-ṭāriq*, from *ṭaraqa*, meaning to knock, on account of how at night visitors would knock on the door, whereas during the day it was the habit to leave doors open, and the visitor would simply call out and seek permission to enter. Here what is meant is the star that appears at night, as the following āyāt make clear.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the nightcomer? (2)

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلطَّارِقُ ﴿٢﴾

This is to give gravity to the issue of stars.

The piercing star. (3)

ٱلنَّجْمُ ٱلثَّاقِبُ ﴿٣﴾

The star that pierces the darkness of the night sky with its light. And whoever is aware of the greatness of the stars and their vast number and their vast distance, so distant that it takes millions of years for their light to reach the earth, is aware of the importance of this oath. And it would seem that what is

meant by the star is the entire class of stars, and not one particular star, while what has been mentioned in some commentaries are examples.

There is no soul but that over it is a minder. (4) إِن كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ لَّمَّا عَلَيۡهَا حَافِظٞ ٤

This is the object of the oath. Over every soul there is a keeper, deputed by Allah, glory be to Him. These are the angels who keep humans from destruction, and record their deeds.

And if the human being is in doubt about the Divinity, let him consider his origin and growth:

So let man reflect; from what he was created: (5) فَلۡيَنظُرِ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ٥

That is, let him consider and reflect upon how he was created, and the nature of his origin.

He was created from a spurting liquid, (6) خُلِقَ مِن مَّآءٖ دَافِقٖ ٦

Spurting is given for *dāfiq*, from *dafaqa*, meaning to pour in spurts and with force, which is how semen comes out.

Issuing from between the loins and the chest; (7) يَخۡرُجُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ ٱلصُّلۡبِ وَٱلتَّرَآئِبِ ٧

'Loins' is given for *ṣulb*, the bone behind which is the centre of male semen. 'Chest' is given for *tarā'ib*, the sides of the chest, for that is where the female's effusions are generated.

Indeed He is capable of his return, (8) إِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ رَجۡعِهِۦ لَقَادِرٞ ٨

Verily Allah who created the human in this way is able to bring him back to life after death, just as He is capable of originating man's creation from a thing unmentionable.

The day the secrets are tried, (9) يَوۡمَ تُبۡلَى ٱلسَّرَآئِرُ ٩

On the day of resurrection people's secrets and what good and evil they kept hidden will become manifest.

Then he has no power and no succourer. (10)

فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ ١٠

The human being shall have no power to ward off the chastisement, and no saviour to save him from that terror. So let him fear and beware of opposing Allah, glory be to Him, for should he do so he will be afflicted with the chastisement.

By the sky, holding the return, (11)

وَٱلسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ ٱلرَّجۡعِ ١١

An oath by the sky that has returns, for with each cycle it all returns to its original position. Or what is meant [by return] is the rain, on account of it returning again and again, raining at different intervals. Or on account of the rain returning to the earth after ascending in the vapour form.

And the earth, holding the split, (12)

وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ ذَاتِ ٱلصَّدۡعِ ١٢

An oath by the earth that splits so that plants grow out of it.

Indeed it is a distinguishing word, (13)

إِنَّهُۥ لَقَوۡلٞ فَصۡلٞ ١٣

The Qur’an, or what has been mentioned concerning man's return after death – which is more in harmony with the previous two portents – the truth from the false.

And it is no amusement. (14)

وَمَا هُوَ بِٱلۡهَزۡلِ ١٤

The word is serious and real, and it is not said for amusement.

Indeed they are plotting a plot, (15)

إِنَّهُمۡ يَكِيدُونَ كَيۡدٗا ١٥

The disbelievers plotted and schemed to nullify the decisive word, with their plot to have it received as poetry or divination or sorcery and suchlike.

And I am plotting a plot; (16)

وَأَكِيدُ كَيۡدٗا ١٦

Allah intends an affair the opposite of what they intend. His calling His intention a plot is metaphorical.

So respite the disbelievers, respite them, a while. (17)

فَمَهِّلِ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ أَمۡهِلۡهُمۡ رُوَيۡدَۢا ﴿١٧﴾

O Messenger, do not concern yourself with them, but put up with them till you see how Allah deals with them.

Surah al-Aᶜlā (87)
'The Highest'

سورة الأعلى

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *aᶜlā*, meaning 'most high'. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with explaining principles of faith. And as Surah al-Ṭāriq concluded on the theme of Allah's plans for the disbelievers, so this surah opens on the theme of His being the Most High, emphasizing what went before.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** whose is the creation and the order. He is the First and the Last.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who graces everything with mercy. Thus does He the Most High describe Himself so as to affect mercy in he who remembers Him, for He is grateful to whoever is grateful to Him, mindful of whoever is mindful of Him.

Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Highest, (1)

سَبِّحِ ٱسۡمَ رَبِّكَ ٱلۡأَعۡلَى ١

The address is in the singular. 'Glorify' is given for *sabbiḥ*, meaning to declare Him pure and holy and above all imperfection such as having partners or offspring, and to not attribute anything to Him that is contrary to the station of Divinity. The command to glorify the name has the effect of magnification, for whoever must glorify His name must of primacy glorify Him.

'The Highest' is given for *al-Aᶜlā*, meaning higher than all other things, for nothing is higher than Him in knowledge or power or creativity or provision or any of the other Divine attributes, whether of His essence or His works.

Who creates then fashions, (2)

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ٢

He created all people, then fashioned them to their perfection with precision and exactitude. For it is not that some people are perfectly formed and other imperfect. For He has fashioned the creation of every thing and then bestowed on it what brings it to perfection, according to its capabilities and capacities.

And who determines and then guides, (3) وَٱلَّذِى قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ ﴿٣﴾

'Determines' is given for *qaddara*, meaning to draw up a plan for something, like an architect draws his plans and then builds. And then He guides, that is He guides every creature to what benefits it. He creates, He provides the essential equipment, He fashions ready for life, and He guides, glory be to Him.

And who brings out the pastures, (4) وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَخْرَجَ ٱلْمَرْعَىٰ ﴿٤﴾

He makes grow the greenery on which animals graze from the earth.

And then turns them into a greenish black straw. (5) فَجَعَلَهُۥ غُثَآءً أَحْوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

After their being green Allah turns them into dry straw scattered about with no firm connection to the earth, like the scum you see floating on flood-waters.

It is an instance of His guidance, glory be to Him, that He sent down the Qur'an to the Prophet. It is narrated that ibn ^c^Abbās reported that when the Prophet was visited by Gabriel with the revelation he would recite it fearing that he would forget it, and so Gabriel would not depart when the Prophet had begun reciting it. And so Allah sent this verse:

Soon We shall set thee to recite so thou shall not forget, (6) سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنسَىٰٓ ﴿٦﴾

That is, We shall reveal it to you for you to recite it to humankind, and you shall not forget any of it. For Allah, glory be to Him, willed for the Prophet to be purified of any forgetfulness, and the same was true of the other Prophets. As for His word *"forget"* it is of the form *"We have forgotten ye"* as in *"Taste ye then – for your forgetting the meeting of this day of yours – We too have forgotten ye."* [32:14] [Forget here means neglect.] Perhaps this action was to instruct the Muslims thereafter to be eager for the Qur'an with a similar eagerness to that shown by the Prophet.

Save what Allah wills, indeed He knows the manifest and what is hidden, (7) إِلَّا مَا شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ يَعْلَمُ ٱلْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ ﴿٧﴾

Save what Allah wills … here is an indication that the Prophet's not forgetting any of it is a power granted to him from Allah, glory be to Him, and that if He willed otherwise then He would have made it so. And it is said that the inclusion of Allah's will in this verse shows that however high a station the Prophet had attained to, still all his affairs were in the hand of Allah, the Most High.

... indeed He knows what is manifest, ... meaning that which is spoken aloud and in public.

... and what is hidden, That is, He knows what is secret and spoken in private. And all of this giving the Prophet to recite and protecting him from forgetfulness was only what He willed according to His knowledge that encompasses all things; and according to His knowledge of what is best He made the Prophet not forget. Otherwise, were he forgetful, he would not be reliable for the message, due to the possibility of him forgetting in his words and his deeds.

And We shall ease thee to the easier, (8)

وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

That is, We shall make you successful on the path of ease in all affairs, for His laws, glory be to Him, deliver a person to felicity in the easiest of ways.

So remind, indeed the reminder benefits; (9)

فَذَكِّرْ إِن نَّفَعَتِ ٱلذِّكْرَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

That is, remind humankind, O Messenger, of what has been placed within them: their natural inclinations that signify the Divinity and the return and suchlike. For such reminders are useful, even though they add nothing to the proofs that had been conclusively conveyed. If they were not beneficial, or if the Prophet saw them as being useless, he would not strive to guide for he would have no hope of success, nor would he see it as necessary to present the arguments and evidences, for they had already been conclusively presented. So there would be no need for him to remind.

He who fears shall be reminded, (10)

سَيَذَّكَّرُ مَن يَخْشَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

He who fears the chastisement of Allah, glory be to Him, will profit from the Qur'an and your words, O Messenger.

While the foulest will shun it, (11) وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا ٱلْأَشْقَى ﴿١١﴾

The most miserable and most wretched *(al-ashqā)* will distance themselves from the reminders and admonishments. The disbeliever who shuns the reminders is more immersed in wretchedness than a sinner.

He who will enter the great fire, (12) ٱلَّذِى يَصْلَى ٱلنَّارَ ٱلْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾

He enters the fire of hell and remains there.

And thereupon will neither die nor live. (13) ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

He would not die within the fire so that that would be the end of hi affliction, and yet he has no life, in the sense that he has none of the things that make life worth living.

Thrived indeed has he who becomes purified, (14) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

He who cleanses himself and makes himself righteous by shunning the vices, and by adorning himself with the virtues, has achieved and succeeded and been saved.

And remembers the name of his Lord and so prays; (15) وَذَكَرَ ٱسْمَ رَبِّهِۦ فَصَلَّىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

And remembers the name of his Lord … That is, he remembers Allah, glory be to Him, in his heart; 'the name' is used to magnify Allah and denote His grandeur.

... and so prays;: That is, to Allah, meaning that he becomes humble before Him; or that he performs the prayer which is an indication of man's humility and of his remembrance of Allah.

According to some narration's what is meant by this is the Zakāt al-Fiṭrah and the prayer of ^c^Id, but this would seem to be an instance of an application or embodiment (*mīsdāq*). And the application of the general import to a particular embodiment can be made at any time, whenever an embodiment exists. Thus there is no weight to the objection that the surah is Makkan and revealed at a time when there was no Zakāt at-Fiṭrah and no ^c^Id prayer.

Nay, ye prefer the lower life, (16) بَلۡ تُؤۡثِرُونَ ٱلۡحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنۡيَا ١٦

Lower life means this world. The address is in the plural, and therefore directed to those who do not purify themselves and do not pray. They choose to spend their wealth and their time in the pleasures of the near life, i.e. this world, rather than in self-purification and prayer.

Though the hereafter is better, and more lasting. (17) وَٱلۡأٓخِرَةُ خَيۡرٞ وَأَبۡقَىٰٓ ١٧

The afterlife, that is, paradise, is better than the low world. Its pleasures are more and are not spoiled by worry and vexation, and they do not end. For the afterlife is an eternal, unceasing world, whereas this world is finite and temporary.

Indeed that is in the earlier scriptures, (18) إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَفِي ٱلصُّحُفِ ٱلۡأُولَىٰ ١٨

That: the account of the self-purifying, praying person's success, or the whole of what has been mentioned in this surah. All of Allah's revealed books encourage self-purification, charity, prayer and the other goodly activities; they are not innovations of the Qur'an.

The scriptures of Abraham, and of Moses. (19) صُحُفِ إِبۡرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ ١٩

These two Messengers (Abraham and Moses, *peace be upon them*) are mentioned as examples, for otherwise all of Allah's Prophets called to purification, prayer and charity.

Surah al-Ghāshiyah (88)
'The Enveloper'

سورة الغاشية

This surah is called al-Ghāshiyah on account of the prominence of the word *ghāshiyah*, meaning 'enveloper'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of belief. As Surah al-Aᶜlā contained reference to the division of mankind into two groups, so this surah presents a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... Beginning by the name of the Owner of all things, for that is the best to begin with.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful He who bestows His mercy upon all the servants.

Has there come to thee the account of the Enveloper? (1)

هَلۡ أَتَىٰكَ حَدِيثُ ٱلۡغَٰشِيَةِ ﴿١﴾

That is, has there come to you, O Messenger, or O listener, news of the resurrection. The name Enveloper (*al-ghāshiyah*) is given to the day of resurrection on account of humankind being enveloped by the terror of that day. The question form is used not to seek an answer, but for emphasis and to incite passion.

Faces on that day are humble, (2)

وُجُوهٞ يَوۡمَئِذٍ خَٰشِعَةٌ ﴿٢﴾

On the day of resurrection faces will be lowered in disgrace on account of their actions in disbelieving and committing sins. The humiliation is attributed to faces since that is where it will be apparent.

Labouring, exhausted, (3)

عَامِلَةٞ نَّاصِبَةٞ ﴿٣﴾

They laboured, and exhausted their efforts in that that would end up in fire, yet their toil and exhaustion will not profit them, rather their world became a cause of their chastisement.

Burning in a raging fire, (4)

تَصۡلَىٰ نَارًا حَامِيَةٗ ﴿٤﴾

They will be thrust into the fire, never to come out. And the fire will be stoked up until its heat is severe and intense.

Given to drink at a boiling spring, (5)

تُسْقَىٰ مِنْ عَيْنٍ ءَانِيَةٍ ﴿٥﴾

Those faces will be made to drink at a spring whose water is intensely hot. 'Faces' in these portents refers to their possessors, just as 'neck' is used for a person.

That is their drink, but what is their food?

They have no food save darīc, (6)

لَّيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِن ضَرِيعٍ ﴿٦﴾

In a report from the Prophet, "*ḍarīc* is something in the fire more bitter than aloes, with a smell worse than putrefying meat, and hotter than fire."

It fattens not nor relieves from hunger; (7)

لَّا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِى مِن جُوعٍ ﴿٧﴾

It does not nourish those who eat it, and they will be just as hungry after eating it as they were before they ate it.

That is the condition of the sinners, now we turn to the conditions of the people of conviction:

Faces on that day are blessed, (8)

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ ﴿٨﴾

On the day of resurrection people will be delighted by the various delights and pleasures, their faces showing all the signs of their felicity and joy.

Content with their effort, (9)

لِّسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾

They will be more than happy that they strived in the world, for that is the reason for their attaining to their felicity in paradise.

In a high garden, (10)

فِى جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿١٠﴾

High in location and status, for its acres and palaces are in the most lofty sphere.

They hear within it no vanity. (11) لَّا تَسۡمَعُ فِيهَا لَٰغِيَةً ﴿١١﴾

That is, those fortunate hear no useless, base talk.

Within it a flowing spring. (12) فِيهَا عَيۡنٞ جَارِيَةٞ ﴿١٢﴾

All those who pass it may partake of it. Flowing water is the most refreshing to drink and the most pleasing to the eye.

Within it elevated couches, (13) فِيهَا سُرُرٞ مَّرۡفُوعَةٞ ﴿١٣﴾

That is, elevated in position, value and status.

And glasses placed, (14) وَأَكۡوَابٞ مَّوۡضُوعَةٞ ﴿١٤﴾

Small, beautiful glasses placed at the side of the streams, to drink from. The rhyming nature of these two portents is an instance of delightful eloquence.

And cushions in rows, (15) وَنَمَارِقُ مَصۡفُوفَةٞ ﴿١٥﴾

Cushions to recline upon, set in rows one next to the other.

And carpets laid out. (16) وَزَرَابِيُّ مَبۡثُوثَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾

Rich and luxurious carpets laid out to be sat upon.

Following the mention of these conditions of the paradise and the fire, the surah turns to demonstrating proofs of the Divinity, so as to mobilise man in the direction of the eternal good fortune:

Have they not looked to the camel, how it is created? (17) أَفَلَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَى ٱلۡإِبِلِ كَيۡفَ خُلِقَتۡ ﴿١٧﴾

Have the disbelievers not stopped to consider the camel, the precision and perfection with which it is created? No animal is particular in being a proof of Allah, for all animals are signs demonstrating the existence of God and His attributes; the camel is mentioned on account of it being a sign well-known to the Arabs. And it is in harmony with what is mentioned in the subsequent āyāt or verses: the elevated sky, the solid mountains and the expansive earth; for the camel is adapted to journey across the desert where there is nothing but the ground, the sky above and mountains.

And at the sky, how it is elevated? (18) وَإِلَى ٱلسَّمَآءِ كَيۡفَ رُفِعَتۡ ١٨

Sky is all that is in space above and beyond the earth. By the sky is meant the stars, or the orbits, or that kaleidoscope presented to the eye by differences in weather.

And at the mountains, how they are fixed? (19) وَإِلَى ٱلۡجِبَالِ كَيۡفَ نُصِبَتۡ ١٩

Mountains fixed in the earth like pegs, so that they remain fixed and steady.

And at the earth, how it is laid? (20) وَإِلَى ٱلۡأَرۡضِ كَيۡفَ سُطِحَتۡ ٢٠

It is laid out to facilitate routes and pathways for people. The meaning of these portents is to ask those addressed whether they do not reflect on these signs and so deduce from them His existence, glory be to Him, and His other attributes. The question form is used as a reproach.

So remind – for thou are but a reminder; (21) فَذَكِّرۡ إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مُذَكِّرٞ ٢١

Remind humankind, O Messenger, of these signs. For your role is to explain to them the realities placed in their nature concerning the Divinity, the Return and suchlike.

Thou are not empowered over them (22) لَّسۡتَ عَلَيۡهِم بِمُصَيۡطِرٍ ٢٢

They are not in your power, O Messenger, for you to be responsible for their deviation. The station of the Prophets is to remind and exhort, so whoever wills shall be guided and whoever wills shall go astray.

So remind, for the reminders benefit ...

Save him who turns away and disbelieves, (23) إِلَّا مَن تَوَلَّىٰ وَكَفَرَ ٢٣

The reminders do not profit him who turns away from the truth and disbelieves in Allah and the resurrection. And he shall not escape the grip of Allah, glory be to Him.

So Allah will chastise him, the greatest chastisement. (24)

فَيُعَذِّبُهُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡعَذَابَ ٱلۡأَكۡبَرَ ٢٤

That is, in the hereafter.

Indeed unto Us is their return, (25)

إِنَّ إِلَيۡنَآ إِيَابَهُمۡ ٢٥

That is, to Our reckoning and recompense is their return after death.

Then indeed upon Us is their reckoning. (26)

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيۡنَا حِسَابَهُم ٢٦

After their return they will be reckoned by all that they did, and they will be recompensed, evil for evil, good for good.

Surah al-Fajr (89)

'The Dawn'

سورة الفجر

This surah owes its name to the prominence within it of the word *al-fajr*, 'the dawn'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the principles of belief. As Surah al-Ghāshiyah concluded with an account of the chastisement in the hereafter of those who turn away, this surah opens with an account of their chastisement in the world,

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … Beginning by the name of He in whose hand are all things. He is the point of origin and the point of return. Is there anything more worthy of beginning by, than the name of Allah, the Most High?

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, He who by His mercy bestows on all creatures.

By the dawn, (1)

وَٱلۡفَجۡرِ ١

An oath by the dawn, the break of day preceding sunrise, when light begins to appear in the eastern sky from about an hour and a half before sunrise [depending on the geographical location].

And ten nights, (2)

وَلَيَالٍ عَشۡرٖ ٢

An oath by the ten nights of the month of Hajj (*Dhil-Hijjah*), according to what has been stated in the commentaries. It seems that the oath is by the goodness these events occasion, for the dawn occasions light, while the ten nights are the occasion of worship and obedience.

And the even and the odd, (3)

وَٱلشَّفۡعِ وَٱلۡوَتۡرِ ٣

'The even' is given for *al-shafᶜ*, which is the name of a two-unit prayer that is part of the night-prayer (*ṣalāt al-layl*), while the odd is given for *al-witr*, which is a single-unit prayer that is the final part of the night-prayer. Alternatively it is narrated that *al-shafᶜ* means the eighth of the month *Dhil-Hijjah* – known as the day of Tarwiyah – and *al-witr* the ninth – known as the day ᶜArafah.

And the night when it journeys on; (4) وَٱلَّيۡلِ إِذَا يَسۡرِ ۝٤

That is, by the night when it passes on. The object of this oath is not made explicit, but is implied by the words 'Have thou not seen ...' (below). It is: 'Indeed We shall punish the disbelievers.'

Is there in that an oath for the holder of reason? (5) هَلۡ فِي ذَٰلِكَ قَسَمٞ لِّذِي حِجۡرٍ ۝٥

'That' refers to the oaths given in the preceding āyāt. The question form denotes censure and rebuke, meaning: 'How do you not confirm this word after these oaths.' Reason is given for *ḥijr*, which is a noun meaning something forbidden, but is also one of the names of reason (*ᶜaql*), on account of how reason forbids whoever has it from doing whatever is unsuitable for him.

Have thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with ᶜAd (6) أَلَمۡ تَرَ كَيۡفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ ۝٦

That is, do thou not know, O Messenger, or O listener, what thy Lord did to the tribe of ᶜĀd.

Of Iram, holder of the pillars? (7) إِرَمَ ذَاتِ ٱلۡعِمَادِ ۝٧

Iram is the place in which the ᶜād built their splendid buildings. There were two peoples who went by the name of ᶜād, one of whom were the ᶜād of Iram. This is the people meant in the verse, which clarifies the meaning of the previous verse. By pillars *(ᶜimād)* is meant their columned buildings; although the word is also used figuratively, to signify strength and importance.

It is said that one Shidād, of the tribe of ᶜād, was a powerful ruler with a vast realm who disbelieved in God. So when he heard about the paradise and its descriptions, he announced that he would build such a place on the earth. And he built it at Iram. What he built was magnificent and beautiful, having palaces and gardens with luxurious furnishings. But when he and his people and troops went to occupy it, Allah destroyed them all. He sent a terrible cry and they were all destroyed.

Whose like had not been created in the lands. (8) ٱلَّتِي لَمۡ يُخۡلَقۡ مِثۡلُهَا فِي ٱلۡبِلَٰدِ ۝٨

Whose like had not been created … That is, the like of the tribe of ᶜād had not been created before, in terms of power and wealth and suchlike; or the like of Iram had not been created before, in terms of magnificence, splendour and beauty.

… in the lands (*al-bilād*): it would appear that what is meant is that such had not been created in those times, rather than generally applying to all times.

And Thamud, who cut through rock for the valley? (9)	وَثَمُودَ ٱلَّذِينَ جَابُوا۟ ٱلصَّخْرَ بِٱلْوَادِ ﴿٩﴾

That is, have you not seen how your Lord treated the Thamūd, the tribe of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ, *peace be upon him*. They quarried rock from the mountains and brought it to the Qara valley in which they lived, and built with it houses made of stone.

And Pharaoh, having the stakes? (10)	وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِى ٱلْأَوْتَادِ ﴿١٠﴾

It is said that stakes (*awtād*) would be driven through the bodies of those he considered criminals, and they would be left there until dead. The Pharaoh who is meant is the Pharaoh of the time of Moses, *peace be upon him*. In these āyāt Allah, glory be to Him, has chosen as examples the strongest nations of their time, so as to explain that because they were insolent and opposed the commands of Allah, glory be to Him, He destroyed them, and all their power did not benefit them in the least, and that the disbelievers of the time of the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah – far weaker than those cited – would share the some fate if they persisted in their arrogance and disbelief.

Those who transgressed in the lands, (11)	ٱلَّذِينَ طَغَوْا۟ فِى ٱلْبِلَٰدِ ﴿١١﴾

That is, they opposed their Prophets, and acted in disbelief and sin.

And increased in them corruption; (12)	فَأَكْثَرُوا۟ فِيهَا ٱلْفَسَادَ ﴿١٢﴾

That is, they increased corruption in their cities with murder and debauchery and suchlike.

So thy Lord poured upon them the lash of chastisement. (13)	فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ﴿١٣﴾

Here the chastisement is expressed as a lash on account of the severity of pain that a lash inflicts. 'Poured' (*ṣabba*) is used on account of how a lash, being supple, comes into contact with the body by degrees, resembling the effect of pouring, which also makes contact by degrees. The elegance of this expression is clear.

Indeed thy Lord is at the vantage-point. (14)

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِٱلۡمِرۡصَادِ ﴿١٤﴾

The address is in the singular. 'The vantage-point' is given for *al-mirṣād*, meaning a place where a man keeps watch on another, or an opposing force, without being seen himself. This is a metonymy suggestive of the fact that God, glory be to Him, is aware of mankind; so whoever disbelieves and works evil is watched by God, for nothing escapes Him.

The human being rebels in this way – such that this becomes his fate – when he is not guided by the guidance of Allah, the Most High.

But the human, when his Lord tries him by honouring him and blessing him, says, 'My Lord has honoured me.' (15)

فَأَمَّا ٱلۡإِنسَـٰنُ إِذَا مَا ٱبۡتَلَىٰهُ رَبُّهُۥ فَأَكۡرَمَهُۥ
وَنَعَّمَهُۥ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّيٓ أَكۡرَمَنِ ﴿١٥﴾

'The human' in this verse means he who is not guided by the light of faith. When he is tested with the lightest of tests, still he fails his test. Allah gives him a noble, honourable position along with plentiful abundance, so as to test him and see whether he lives up to the responsibilities of wealth and position or not. But he exhilarates at it and considers it a fitting reward for himself, and that he deserves what has been given to him. He becomes conceited and considers that God has chosen him for such blessings, losing sight of the fact that they are a test for him.

But when He tries him by limiting his provision, he says 'My Lord scorns me.' (16)

وَأَمَّآ إِذَا مَا ٱبۡتَلَىٰهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيۡهِ رِزۡقَهُۥ فَيَقُولُ
رَبِّيٓ أَهَـٰنَنِ ﴿١٦﴾

When Allah, glory be to Him, tests him with poverty and hardship and straitens his provision, the human takes it amiss and imagines that Allah is slighting him, and does not perceive it as a test. This is in contrast to the believer, who sees every condition that comes to him as a trial and a test; he fears wealth and plenty as it may cause him to be disobedient and not be

thankful, while he is not saddened by poverty for he counts it as a test that will, if he is patient and steadfast, raise his station.

Nay, but ye honour not the orphan, (17)

كَلَّا ۖ بَل لَّا تُكْرِمُونَ ٱلْيَتِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾

Nay, the affair is not as this person supposes. The provision of bounties is not a sign of honour; while poverty is not a sign of Allah's disfavour; but rather all such conditions are for the purpose of examination. But they are ignorant of the logic of bestowing and withholding, heedless of the fact that it is all for the purpose of testing them. Thus it is that they do not perform the obligatory deeds of giving, not even to the orphan. The obligation of poverty, that is to say patience, forbearance, is not mentioned since the discussion is directed at the wealthy amongst the people, who resembled the ᶜĀd, the Thamūd and the Pharaoh.

And urge not the feeding of the poor, (18)

وَلَا تَحَٰٓضُّونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, you do not urge each other to feed your poor.

And ye eat the inheritance, devouring it whole, (19)

وَتَأْكُلُونَ ٱلتُّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا ﴿١٩﴾

That is, ye do so without observing the rights of the deceased from inheritance, the right of Allah, or the rights of other relatives entitled to it. Women, children and the weak were all excluded from inheritance, and received nothing. This shows the disbelievers' inordinate desire for wealth, and their viewing it not as a means of trial and examination, but as a sign of the divine favour upon them.

And ye love wealth with an ardent love. (20)

وَتُحِبُّونَ ٱلْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾

That is, they loved wealth with a love that was intense and abounding, and so would not spend it in any of the obligatory or desirable ways; as is the way with those who do not believe in Allah and the day of resurrection, and do not see wealth as a test of whether they obey the command of Allah.

Nay, when the earth is flattened; flat, flat, (21)

كَلَّآ إِذَا دُكَّتِ ٱلْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ﴿٢١﴾

Nay, the affair is not as you suppose without there being a consequence for your present deeds. For whoever sees himself as honoured by Allah belittles the performance of the duties required by his station and affairs. But the day will come when the earth is flattened, and everything is ground into dust upon its surface – the mountains, hills and everything built upon it – and all will be perfectly flat.

And thy Lord comes, and the angels, in rows, in rows, (22)

وَجَآءَ رَبُّكَ وَٱلۡمَلَكُ صَفّٗا صَفّٗا ٢٢

That is, the order (*amr*) of your Lord will come. Just as kings in the world appear in all their majesty and glory, on the resurrection day all majesty and glory will be that of Allah, glory be to Him, and He will appear in all His glory, but as Allah is above and free of material substance, that which will appear are the effects of His glory. The angels will come that day arrayed in row after row, rank after rank, file after file.

And hell will be brought that day, the day when the human remembers; but how will remembrance be for him? (23)

وَجِاْيٓءَ يَوۡمَئِذِۭ بِجَهَنَّمَۚ يَوۡمَئِذٖ يَتَذَكَّرُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ وَأَنَّىٰ لَهُ ٱلذِّكۡرَىٰ ٢٣

That is, the fires of hell will be dragged to the raising-ground after being held ready for the disbelievers and the sinners at some distance. Then will man remember: he will be admonished and will fear and be guided [to recognise the truth];

… but how will remembrance be for him? But how will the remembrance benefit him? For the time when remembering is of benefit will have expired. That day is the day of recompense, not of deeds.

He says: 'O would that I had sent ahead for my life!' (24)

يَقُولُ يَٰلَيۡتَنِي قَدَّمۡتُ لِحَيَاتِي ٢٤

That is, the sinful man will wish that he had sent good deeds ahead of himself for his eternal life. But his wishing will not benefit him.

That day, no one chastises as His chastisement, (25)

فَيَوۡمَئِذٖ لَّا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهُۥٓ أَحَدٞ ٢٥

That is, none can chastise like the chastisement of Allah, for His chastisement is not like the chastisements of people, some of others, but entirely different.

And no one binds as His binding. (26) وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُۥٓ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

On that day He will bind in a way no other can bind.

The believer is then addressed, in His word:

O thou the confident soul! (27) يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾

That is, untroubled by the terror of that day, on account of its faith and good deeds while in the world.

Return to thy Lord, content, and contented, (28) ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾

That is: return to His rewards, while you are in the condition of being pleased and content with Allah, glory be to Him, and while you are pleasing to Him and He is content with you on account of your faith and deeds.

So enter amongst My servants, (29) فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى ﴿٢٩﴾

That is: enter the ranks of My servants.

And enter My garden. (30) وَٱدْخُلِى جَنَّتِى ﴿٣٠﴾

You are in My contentment and in My paradise. It seems that the address is made to the 'soul' (*nafs*) as a mode of conveying honour, in that it is the soul that bears the troubles of the body; and it is appropriate, therefore, that it is the soul that is rewarded.

Surah al-Balad (90)

'The Land'

سورة البلد

This surah owes its name to the prominence within it of the word *balad*, meaning 'land' or 'city' (and its outlying areas). Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith and the supporting arguments. As the previous surah classified mankind into the good and the evil, so the present surah explains this in a different way.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

We begin ***by the name of Allah,*** it is the name that is given for it is the name be which we begin, not the Essence.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows mercy on the servants by perfecting their deficiencies, and delivering them to the perfection possible for them, by creating and guiding.

I swear not by this land, (1)

لَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِهَـٰذَا ٱلۡبَلَدِ ۝١

That is, by Makkah. 'Not' is given for *lā*, which is either a sign of negation used here as a prelude to the oath, and to give importance to that by which the oath is sworn; or it is decorous. The following verse accords to both meanings.

And thou are a resident of this land, (2)

وَأَنتَ حِلُّۢ بِهَـٰذَا ٱلۡبَلَدِ ۝٢

'A resident' is given here for *ḥill*, meaning an inhabitant, someone who lives there. The meaning is that the land is honoured on account of the Prophet being of it. The honour of a house is due to the honour of he who lives in it. So the āyāt mean: I swear by this land, on account of the honour it has accrued due to your living in it. Or: I do not swear by this city, for it owes its honour to you.

And the father and that which he fathers, (3)

وَوَالِدٖ وَمَا وَلَدَ ۝٣

That is, I swear by every father and by every child. Or whom is meant is Adam, *peace be upon him*, and his offspring. Every creation of Allah is grand, and appropriate to be sworn by. However, it is not for us to swear by everything, for it is reported from one of the *maᶜsūm* (impeccable) Imāms that

if you were to swear you should swear by Allah or be silent and not swear at all.

We have surely created the human in affliction. (4)

لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ فِي كَبَدٍ ﴿٤﴾

This is the consequent of the oaths. Man's lot in the world is trouble and difficulty, for he is afflicted with adversities, calamities and distress. The meaning is that he is perpetually afflicted with difficulties, in accordance with what God has determined for him and the conditions of existence. Thus God has said in a *hadīth qudsī* (Divine Report): 'I have not put ease in the world and yet mankind seek it there, but they will not find it.'

Verily the human being, who is created to live in difficulty and hardship so that he knows his weakness and restrictions, can be deceived by certain powers he sees within himself and become insolent and arrogant, and imagine himself independent of any power over himself:

Does he reckon that no-one will ever have power over him? (5)

أَيَحۡسَبُ أَن لَّن يَقۡدِرَ عَلَيۡهِ أَحَدٞ ﴿٥﴾

Does man imagine that one is not in power over him and able to take away his power, his wealth, his life and so forth?

And when it is said to him, 'Seek the pleasure of Allah by spending your wealth in His way, for you are His helpless servant, while He, glory be to Him, is able to transform you however He likes':

He says, 'I have disposed of wealth in masses.' (6)

يَقُولُ أَهۡلَكۡتُ مَالٗا لُّبَدًا ﴿٦﴾

That is, he claims to have given large sums, and says that he has given enough; as is generally the logic of the wealthy.

Does he reckon that no-one sees him? (7)

أَيَحۡسَبُ أَن لَّمۡ يَرَهُۥٓ أَحَدٌ ﴿٧﴾

Does he imagine that there is not one observing how he spends? Nay, Allah sees him and knows the amount of his beneficence. What he spends is not a lot in relation to the amount of his wealth and to the rewards he hopes to earn in the afterlife as a result of his beneficence. It is said that this verse was revealed in relation to one Hārith ibn Nawfal ibn ᶜAbd Manāf, as he committed a sin and then sought the view of the Prophet, who ordered him to pay a penance

(kaffāra). He then said that since entering the religion of Muhammad, he had used up all his wealth in penances and beneficence.

He was mean about spending a portion of his wealth in the way of Allah, although Allah has placed within him faculties and abilities that are beyond all worldly value, and he was ungrateful; and on account of that he was blind to the path of growth and success.

Have We not set for him two eyes? (8)

أَلَمۡ نَجۡعَل لَّهُۥ عَيۡنَيۡنِ ۝٨

For him to see his path.

And a tongue, and two lips? (9)

وَلِسَانٗا وَشَفَتَيۡنِ ۝٩

For him to speak and be adorned, so as not to have a mouth that is a gaping hole.

And guided him the two highways? (10)

وَهَدَيۡنَٰهُ ٱلنَّجۡدَيۡنِ ۝١٠

That is, have We not made clear for him the two paths, the path of goodness and the path of evil? 'highways' is put for *najd*, meaning a height. It is as if a path metaphorically raises a person in the direction of his wants, or the appearance of a path is called a 'highway' on account of its seeming to be raised above the ground.

Yet he does not assault the steep path (11)

فَلَا ٱقۡتَحَمَ ٱلۡعَقَبَةَ ۝١١

'Assault' is given for *aqtaḥama*, meaning to engage in a thing with force. 'Steep path' is given for *ᶜaqaba*, meaning a difficult path up the side of a mountain. The meaning is that man is not grateful for the favours Allah grants him by grasping the goodly affairs and acting accordingly. The word *ᶜaqaba* is used to denote the difficulty of the matter for the human being.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the steep path? (12)

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡعَقَبَةُ ۝١٢

The address is to the listener. The form of the verse is used to signify the magnificence and majesty of the steep path. The meaning of this is then clarified in the subsequent āyāt.

Freeing a neck, (13) فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ ﴿١٣﴾

That is, freeing a slave.

Or feeding, on a day of famine, (14) أَوْ إِطْعَٰمٌ فِى يَوْمٍ ذِى مَسْغَبَةٍ ﴿١٤﴾

'Or', here, means 'and', so that the meaning of the verse is that amongst the instances of the steep path is the feeding of people in time of hunger and famine.

An orphan near of kin, (15) يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾

That is, the steep path includes the feeding of any orphan who is related to the one doing the feeding; for doing good to relatives is better than doing good to others. As the holy prophet said, "the good deed (to others) does not count as charity while the near of kin are in need."

Or one destitute, in the dust. (16) أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

'Destitute' is given for *miskīn*, meaning one who is inactive due to his poverty; for the wealthy are active in a variety of spheres seeking their needs, while the poor are constrained by their poverty from engaging in affairs. 'In the dust' (*Dhā matrabah*) signifies the extent of their need, for poverty brings dust, in the sense that they have no covers to protect them from the dust of the ground on which they sit and sleep. So the phrase means that the pauper is smeared by dust on account of the extremity of his poverty.

Nor is he amongst those who believe and encourage patience and encourage compassion! (17) ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَتَوَاصَوْا۟ بِٱلصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا۟ بِٱلْمَرْحَمَةِ ﴿١٧﴾

'Nor' is a follow on from the negation of "he does not assault the steep path". He did not assault the 'steep path', and moreover he was not even a believer – for belief is the basis for all of man's actions and *the* fundamental criterion. So the verse reads, "not only did he not assault the steep path, but he was not even amongst those who believe and encourage patience and encourage compassion!"

Those who advise patience and forbearance in the face of difficulties, whether they be obligations, prohibitions, or hardships, in that they urge to perform the obligations, abstain from the prohibitions, and not be made desolate by the difficulties, urging people to be compassionate towards others.

Those are the companions of the right. (18)

أُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ أَصۡحَـٰبُ ٱلۡمَيۡمَنَةِ ١٨

Those, i.e. those who believe and encourage patience and encourage compassion, not to mention assaulting the steep path, are the blessed who will be taken by their right hands on the day of resurrection, and will be led on the right-hand path towards the gardens. They will receive their books in their right hands. They are the companions of the right, the companions of good fortune.

While those who disbelieve in Our signs, they are the companions of the inauspicious; (19)

وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا هُمۡ أَصۡحَـٰبُ ٱلۡمَشۡـَٔمَةِ ١٩

Those who disbelieve in Allah's arguments and evidences for His Oneness and the other principles of faith, they are the companions of the inauspicious, who have brought evil upon themselves.

Over them is a closed fire. (20)

عَلَيۡهِمۡ نَارٞ مُّؤۡصَدَةُۢ ٢٠

That is, the doors to the fire are closed over them; they have no way out.

Surah al-Shams (91)

‘The Sun’

سورة الشمس

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-shams*, meaning ‘the sun’. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. In keeping with the previous surah it classifies mankind into two groups: those for the fire, and those for the paradise.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … We seek help with the name of Allah, who is the best of helpers for whoever seeks His help.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows by His mercy and affection upon all of creation, just as He says: *‘My mercy encompasses all things.’* [7:156]

By the sun and its rays, (1)

وَٱلشَّمۡسِ وَضُحَىٰهَا ١

An oath, by the sun and its extending brightness across the horizon.

By the moon when it follows it, (2)

وَٱلۡقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَىٰهَا ٢

The oath is by the moon, when it follows the sun. For it takes the sun's brightness and travels on its heel.

By the day when it unveils it, (3)

وَٱلنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّىٰهَا ٣

The oath is by the day, which makes the sun clear. Here is graceful eloquence, for the attribution of the unveiling of the sun to the day is an instance of literary inversion (*qalb*); as if the sun owes its appearance to the clarity of the day. Arabic literature contains many instances of this.

By the night when it conceals it, (4)

وَٱلَّيۡلِ إِذَا يَغۡشَىٰهَا ٤

The oath is by the night, that is termed as covering the sun and concealing it from sight and hiding it.

By the sky and what built it, (5) وَٱلسَّمَآءِ وَمَا بَنَىٰهَا ۝٥

That is, by He who built the sky, meaning Allah, the Most High. Or perhaps what is meant by ‘what’ is the precision and exactitude with which it is constructed.

By the earth and what spread it, (6) وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَىٰهَا ۝٦

An oath by the earth and He who spread it, and He is Allah. Or perhaps what is meant is its spreading, similar to the previous verse.

By a soul and what fashioned it, (7) وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّىٰهَا ۝٧

The oath is by the soul, every soul, which is presented with the indefinite form for the sake of variety and eloquence. ‘What’ in the verse means ‘who’, that is, and (by) Allah who fashioned it. This interpretation is more in fitting with the portents that follow it.

Then inspired it its brazenness and its guardfulness; (8) فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَىٰهَا ۝٨

‘Inspired’ is given for *alhama*, meaning to teach by means of delivering knowledge to the heart. ‘Its brazenness’ (*fujūr*): its disobedience. Its guardfulness’ (*taqwā*): its obedience. For every human being discriminates between goodness and evil, between obedience and disobedience. These oaths in this surah and elsewhere direct attention to these signs and teachings, besides their being oaths.

Thrived indeed has he who purifies it, (9) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا ۝٩

This is the consequent or the point of the oaths. It is what is sworn to by them. The meaning is that whoever purifies his soul and cleanses it of sins and disbelief has achieved success.

And failed indeed has he who corrupts it. (10) وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّىٰهَا ۝١٠

He who corrupts it, leaving it dirty and concealed by a gloom, through disbelief and disobedience, has failed, has accrued a loss upon himself. To ‘corrupt’ is used for *dassā*, the opposite of *zakkā*, for which ‘purify’ is used.

The thread of the message then turns to warn those who corrupt their souls that their fate is the fate of the previous nations who belied:

Thamud belied through their inordinacy, (11)	كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَىٰهَآ ﴿١١﴾

Thamūd were the tribe of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ. Inordinacy brings about disbelief and belying the truth, as Allah has said: '*Then evil was the end of those who did evil, for they belied the signs of Allah.*' [30: 10]. 'Inordinacy' is put for *ṭaghwā*, meaning exceeding the limit in sin.

When its foulest was sent, (12)	إِذِ ٱنۢبَعَثَ أَشْقَىٰهَا ﴿١٢﴾

The foul and evil leaders of Thamūd sent the worst of them to perform the evil deed. His name was Qidār, and it was he who hamstrung the camel.

So the Messenger of Allah said to them, 'The camel of Allah, and its watering!' (13)	فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ نَاقَةَ ٱللَّهِ وَسُقْيَٰهَا ﴿١٣﴾

'So Allah's Messenger said to them' follows from 'belied ...', not from 'they sent ...'. 'Them' means the tribe of the Thamūd. The Messenger of Allah was Ṣāliḥ. He told them to respect the camel and not do it any harm, and to respect its water, that is, its drinking from the water, and to not prevent it from drinking it. There was a stream and Ṣāliḥ determined that the camel should drink from it on alternate days, so as to give in return milk sufficient for the tribe's needs, while on the other days it was for the people to drink from it. And he told them that if they did any harm to the camel they would be taken by a chastisement.

But they belied him and slaughtered it, so their Lord destroyed them for their sin, and so evened it. (14)	فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِذَنۢبِهِمْ فَسَوَّىٰهَا ﴿١٤﴾

Thamūd belied Ṣāliḥ, and killed the camel by striking its four legs with a sword. He who did this was one man, but the action is attributed to them all on account of their participating in the decision and being content with it. So Allah the Most High 'enveloped them under chastisement' i.e. destroyed them entirely for their sin of killing the camel. 'and so evened it' is given for *"fa-sawwāhā"*, and it may be taken as referring to the totality of their destruction;

in that the crushing and destruction was applied evenly to all of them such that none escaped it. *"fa-sawwāhā"* may also be taken in reference to their land or city, in that the Almighty levelled the ground such that there remained no trace of them.

And He fears not its consequence. (15) وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَٰهَا ﴿١٥﴾

Allah has no fear of any sequel to the destruction. For He is the absolute authority, who is not subject to any consequence for His acts. He is not like human beings who, however powerful and however great their authority, fear the consequences of their acts.

Surah al-Layl (92)

‘The Night’

سورة الليل

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *layl*, meaning ‘night’. Like the other Makkan surahs it contains matters of faith. Yet from the account that follows it is clear that a part of it is sent down at Madinah. This surah, like the previous surah, classifies humankind into two groups.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … Beginning by the name of Allah, who is the first of all things, and as He is the first in existence so it is appropriate that we begin with His name at the commencement of all our affairs.

The Compassionate, the Merciful … who bestows mercy on the servants by fulfilling their needs and forgiving their errors.

By the night when it conceals, (1)

وَٱلَّيۡلِ إِذَا يَغۡشَىٰ ١

An oath by the night when it conceals things by its darkness. This giving of oaths by particular qualities is an instance of eloquence.

By the day when it unveils, (2)

وَٱلنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ ٢

An oath by the day when it unveils; that is, when it becomes light, bright and clear.

By what created the male and the female, (3)

وَمَا خَلَقَ ٱلذَّكَرَ وَٱلۡأُنثَىٰٓ ٣

‘What’ is a precise translation of the word *mā*. There are two grammatical possibilities for the use of this word. The first is that it means ‘who’, so that the verse reads '*And who created the male and the female*,' meaning Allah, glory be to Him. In this case the word is used on account of how ‘who’ is usually used for people and similar creatures. Or the word could be used to change the sense into an infinitive, so that the verse would mean, '*And by the creation of the male and the female*.'

Indeed your striving is diverse; (4) إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّىٰ ﴿٤﴾

Your struggling, O mankind, is towards diverse ends. Some strive for the world, and some struggle for the hereafter. The point of swearing oaths to certify this matter is on account of the consequences of this struggling, or to dispel the allusion that this world is all that it is worth striving for, as if there is no afterlife.

So as for him who gives and is guardful, (5) فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

That is, gives wealth in the way of Allah, and guards against disbelief and disobedience.

And confirms the most excellent, (6) وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٦﴾

That is to say, confirms the most excellent word, which is the declaration of faith (*shahādatayn*). And since the position here is about giving; it comes first, followed by guarding against error, and then comes the turn of belief after these two other issues.

We shall ease him to the easier. (7) فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ ﴿٧﴾

That is, Allah shall make easy for him the easier path, which is the path of obedience. Or, Allah shall guide him to an easier life; for whoever follows the path of Islam, affairs become easier for him on account of the way of life, teachings, and policies that bring about felicity and comfort [in this world before the hereafter].

But as for him who is miserly and seeks wealth (8) وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

That is, he who is mean with his wealth and so does not spend it in the way of Allah; but seeks more wealth by amassing it and not spending it.

And belies the most excellent, (9) وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

That is, he treats as a lie the most excellent word, the declarations of faith, although perhaps what is meant in both portents is the most excellent promise, of the rewards of the hereafter and paradise.

We shall ease him to the harder, (10) فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُۥ لِلۡعُسۡرَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

That is, Allah shall make easy for him the difficult path, which is the path of disbelief. This terminology is used for eloquence, like in the verse '*So whoever is aggressive towards you, be aggressive towards them*' [2: 194], as Allah, glory be to Him, does not make the difficult path easy for anyone. What is meant is that Allah, glory be to Him, does not come between a person and what he does, and does not save him from its consequences.

And his wealth will not enrich him when he is destroyed. (11) وَمَا يُغۡنِي عَنۡهُ مَالُهُۥٓ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰٓ ﴿١١﴾

His wealth with which he is miserly will not benefit him when he is destroyed and brought down to the fire.

It is narrated that a man had a palm date tree, which was leaning over the house of a poor man who had dependents. The owner of the tree would come to the house, enter the yard and climb the tree to pick its dates. Any dates that fell to the ground the poor man's children would gather for themselves. At this the man would descend from the tree and take the dates from their hands. And if he found a date in the mouth of one of them he would put his fingers in their mouth to take it out. The poor man complained to the Prophet, *may Allah bless him and his family,* who listened to him and told him to go. The Prophet, went to see the owner of the tree and asked him to give him the tree in return for a tree in paradise. The man's reply was that he had many trees but none of them gave as good a date as this particular one, and he refused and left. A man standing nearby who heard this conversation – and it is said he was Abu Daḥdāḥ – asked the Prophet if he would give him the same reward, a tree in paradise, if he gifted him the tree. The Prophet told him he would.

So he went to see the owner of the tree so as to buy it from him. 'Do you know that the prophet Muhammad offered me a tree in Paradise for it but I declined?', the man said. Abu Daḥdāḥ asked if he would sell it. The owner told him he would not sell it except for what he thought would never be given him. Abu Daḥdāḥ asked what that was. He told him forty date trees. The Abu Daḥdāḥ was astounded, and objected, but the owner was silent before his objections. So Abu Daḥdāḥ said to him that he would buy the tree for forty trees. The owner said bring witnesses for the transaction, if he meant what he said. So he called some people to witness the transaction. Then he went to the Prophet, *may Allah bless him and his family,* and said to him that he now

owned the tree, and that he gave it to the Prophet. The Prophet went to the owner of the house and gifted the tree to him and his children. And then Allah sent Surah al-Layl. So 'He who gives' was Abu Daḥdāḥ, while 'He who is mean' was the owner of the tree.

Indeed upon Us is the guidance, (12) إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾

That is, Allah's own mercy and beneficence makes it necessary for him to present the proofs and send the messengers. But the acceptance of the guidance and following it is up to man – whoever wills shall be guided and whoever wills shall remain astray.

And indeed Ours is the afterlife and the former. (13) وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

He who accepts the guidance is granted felicity in both worlds; while he who remains in disbelief is denied the good of the world and the blessings of the hereafter.

So I have warned ye, the flaming fire; (14) فَأَنذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

The chastisement of this fire is most severe.

None burn in it but the foulest, (15) لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾

None enter it and remain there but the most wicked, the disbeliever; in contrast to the sinning believer whose foulness and wickedness is less severe, who enters the fire but does not remain there.

Who belies and turns away. (16) الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

He calls the signs of God lies, and disbelieves in Him, and turns away from the truth.

And whosoever is more guardful shall avert it, (17) وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى ﴿١٧﴾

He shall avert the fire, and pass by it. The future tense is given as the resurrection is in the future. He who is more guardful is the obedient believer; the disobedient believer will enter though he shall subsequently depart from it.

He who gives his wealth seeking purification, (18)

ٱلَّذِى يُؤْتِى مَالَهُۥ يَتَزَكَّىٰ ١٨

He gives his wealth in the way of Allah, the Most High, so as to purify and cleanse himself by giving it, as giving cleanses the heart of vices.

While no one has with him any favour to be recompensed, (19)

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِندَهُۥ مِن نِّعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰٓ ١٩

The giver does not give his wealth because someone has done him a favour, and therefore he is doing so to return the favour. For he wants nothing from anyone in return for his giving. He gives solely to please Allah.

Save seeking the pleasure of the face of his Lord, the Highest; (20)

إِلَّا ٱبْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ ٢٠

That is, he seeks nothing except that Allah be satisfied with him. The word ‘face’ is given for *wajh*, as that is where the effect of satisfaction appears in humans; it is a case of likening a metaphysical thing to a physical one. The meaning of the verse is that he seeks no reward for his giving, but gives solely in seeking nearness to Allah, glory be to Him.

And he shall be content. (21)

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ ٢١

The giver shall in turn be satisfied in the hereafter. Allah shall grant him rewards and payments that will satisfy him. For it is narrated concerning this that man will receive in paradise what is beyond his imagination in quantity and in quality.

Surah al-Ḍuḥā (93)
‘The Forenoon’

سورة الضحى

This surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *ḍuḥā*, meaning ‘the forenoon’. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith, with special attention to the subject of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*. Whereas Surah al-Layl concluded on the theme of the virtuous being granted full satisfaction, this surah concentrates on the satisfaction of Allah towards the Messenger, and his wage and reward.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah …*** who is the essence comprising all the qualities of perfection.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who mercifully meets the servants' deficiencies and forgives their sins.

By the forenoon, (1)

وَٱلضُّحَىٰ ۝١

An oath by the spread of morning, that is by the time when the sun's rising in the sky reaches the point when its light is widespread.

By the night when it is still, (2)

وَٱلَّيۡلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ ۝٢

That is, when the night is settled and its darkness is established.

Thy Lord has not bid thee farewell, nor is He angry, (3)

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ ۝٣

That is, revelation and Messengeric consciousness have not departed from you, O Messenger of Allah, in the way that a person bids farewell to a departing friend. Nor is He angry with you.

It is narrated from Imām al-Bāqir, *peace be upon him*, that after the revelation of the surah, '*Recite, in the name of thy Lord, who created ...*', archangel Gabriel came with no further revelation for quite some time. So the Messenger's wife Khadijah said that perhaps his Lord had stopped sending him any more; and then Allah revealed the verse *‘Thy Lord has not bid thee farewell, nor is he angry’*.

And indeed the afterlife is better for thee than the former, (4)	وَلَلۡأٓخِرَةُ خَيۡرٞ لَّكَ مِنَ ٱلۡأُولَىٰ ۝٤

The hereafter is certainly better for the Messenger than the world, for much goodness had been prepared there for the Messenger; so how could Allah forsake him and be angry with him when the affair was only partly accomplished?

And thy Lord shall soon grant thee, so thou shall be content. (5)	وَلَسَوۡفَ يُعۡطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرۡضَىٰٓ ۝٥

The Messenger is granted in the hereafter all that will content him, due to the Divine bounty and beneficence. And amongst what Allah will grant him, is the authority of intercession.

The surah then turns to list God's prior favours to him, emphasising the point that he is at the half-way stage between the former favours and those to come; so how could God be angry with him?:

Did He not find thee an orphan, so sheltered? (6)	أَلَمۡ يَجِدۡكَ يَتِيمٗا فَـَٔاوَىٰ ۝٦

That is, did he not find thee, O Messenger of Allah, an orphan, and did he not shelter thee? For the Messenger's father died before his birth, and He was raised by his clan and tribe, with love and consideration, at a time when orphans were generally considered despicable by the Arabs.

And found thee alone, so guided? (7)	وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلّٗا فَهَدَىٰ ۝٧

The address is to the Messenger. 'alone' is put for *ḍāllan*, literally meaning astray, in the sense here of being away from the path of everyone else. The meaning is that the Messenger was isolated amongst his contemporaries, like a precious object wasting in the barren desert. Thus Allah guided the masses to the Messenger and he thereby was no longer lonely.

***So guided**:* Allah guided humankind to the messenger, and so took them from barbarism and individualism, to that to which otherwise humankind would not have been guided.

And found thee needy, so enriched? (8)	وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلٗا فَأَغۡنَىٰ ۝٨

The Messenger was poor, without property. Allah enriched him, with the property of his wife Khadijah, *peace be on her*, and other property.

As the Messenger had tasted the experience of being an orphan, isolated and poor, he was to have empathy for the troubled, and was to give to those in distress:

So as for the orphan, oppress not, (9) فَأَمَّا ٱلۡيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقۡهَرۡ ۝٩

The orphan should not be made uneasy, and not wronged. The Messenger is addressed in this verse though it is clear he was free from such errors, for these laws apply to him as they apply to all others as well as him.

And as for the asker, rebuff not, (10) وَأَمَّا ٱلسَّآئِلَ فَلَا تَنۡهَرۡ ۝١٠

'Asker' is put for *sā'il*, meaning a person who asks for help, and who is poor and suchlike. He should not be put off rudely, but rather given something, or be given a warm, polite refusal.

And as for the blessing of thy Lord, proclaim. (11) وَأَمَّا بِنِعۡمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثۡ ۝١١

By 'blessing' (*niᶜmah*) is meant the species of blessing, i.e. all blessings. And amongst the greatest of blessings is guidance.

… ***proclaim*** means report to humankind, so that His bounty, glory be to Him, becomes clear to them. This, in addition to gratitude, teaches humankind not to hide their blessings, as has become the habit of many, who list the shortages of their lives but do not remember the Divine blessings upon them.

Surah al-Sharḥ (94) سورة الشرح
'The Expanding'

This surah derives its name from the word *nashraḥ*, meaning 'We expanded'. It is also called *'alam nashraḥ'*, meaning 'Have We not expanded?', and *'al-Inshirāḥ'*, meaning 'The Expansion'. Like the other Makkan surahs, this surah concerns matters of belief, especially with regard to the matter of the Messenger of Allah, like the previous surah. Indeed, as Surah al-Ḍuḥā concerned the person of the Messenger, so this surah reiterates this topic.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Commencing ***By the name of Allah,*** which is the best of maxims for whoever believes in Him, glory be to Him. Is there anything better than positing Him the Most High as a maxim at the beginning of all affairs?

... the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows by His mercy upon all things, as He says in His word '*My mercy embraces all things.*' [7:156]

Have we not expanded for thee thy breast? (1) أَلَمۡ نَشۡرَحۡ لَكَ صَدۡرَكَ ۝١

The address is to the Messenger. Expansion of the breast is a matter of its widening on account of the worthy moral virtues. It is as if the breast, or the chest, of whoever is not kindly, generous or learned, or suchlike, becomes narrow, like a narrow receptacle that is too small to hold much, not being able to cope with demands required. This is all attributed to the chest since the heart, the receptacle of the virtues, is located in the chest. Perhaps the reason for such analogy is that when a person is depressed and dejected over a matter his heart becomes hot and he needs more air in order to cool his heart, and so the lungs swell up and as a result the chest becomes tight. The question form is used for literary beauty, which is not found in simple reporting form.

And lifted from thee thy burden, (2) وَوَضَعۡنَا عَنكَ وِزۡرَكَ ۝٢

The Messenger's heavy load was alleviated. By expanding the Messenger's chest his heavy load – his mission of propagation – was lightened. This is a matter experienced by everyone who is a guide or a leader; at first he sees it as a heavy load to carry out the guidance, but then his chest expands, by the grace

of Allah, glory be to Him, so that he feels that his load is lightened, to the extent that sometimes he feels that he has no load at all.

Which was breaking thy back? (3) ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ ﴿٣﴾

That is, due to the heavy weight of the burden and responsibility of the divine mission he had been commissioned. 'breaking' is put for *anqaḍa*, which means making hear or making to listen, it also means 'weighing down'. For when a person carries a heavy load he listens to his back for any untoward sounds of it popping or straining. This is an instance of the literary device of likening a metaphysical matter to a physical one.

And exalted for thee thy renown? (4) وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴿٤﴾

The address is still in the singular. The Messenger's renown was raised until he was known by everyone for truthfulness, trustworthiness, and so on. This is in addition to how Allah, glory be to Him, raised him later by his mention in the call to prayer and in other ways.

Having explained that the Messenger had entered ease after difficulties, the thread turns to emphasize the truth of this matter in every circumstance of life for everyone:

So indeed in hardship there is an ease; (5) فَإِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾

When a matter makes things hard and severe for a person, there is no doubt but that it will be followed by ease.

Indeed in hardship there is an ease. (6) إِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾

This verse is for emphasis, though it also informative.

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah would go about happy and smiling, and would say 'An hardship does not overcome two eases; for indeed in hardship there is an ease, indeed in hardship there is an ease.'

And a poet has versified this matter, as follows:

'When the world subjects you to its pressure,
Think about 'Have We not expanded for thee thy breast...'
You will find two eases for every hardship,
When you mind it you become happy.'

So when thou have finished, exert, (7) فَإِذَا فَرَغۡتَ فَٱنصَبۡ ۝٧

When you are free, O Messenger, from your particular duties, exert yourself in worship and supplication. Exert: *anṣab*, from *naṣb*, meaning to strain. The Messenger was to exert himself in occupying himself with Allah, glory be to Him, when he was not busy with humankind.

And to thy Lord, be attentive. (8) وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَٱرۡغَب ۝٨

That is, the Messenger was to incline and give all his attention and vigilance to his Lord, alone, or to the Divine affairs. For it was He who made things easy for him, and lightened for him his heavy load.

Surah al-Tin (95)
'The Fig'

سورة التين

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *tīn*, meaning 'fig'. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with explaining matters of faith. As Surah al-Sharḥ concluded on the theme of devoting oneself to Him, glory be to Him, this surah emphasizes that Allah is the most worthy of lawgivers and that in His hands are all affairs. Devotion to Him, therefore, ensures the best of rewards.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***By the name of Allah,*** the name of that essence comprising all the qualities of perfection.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows in His mercy upon all His creatures, encouraging them to seek from His extensive grace and mercy.

By the fig and the olive, (1)

وَٱلتِّينِ وَٱلزَّيۡتُونِ ﴿١﴾

An oath by these two fruits, on account of their abundance in the Shām district – that includes today's Syria and Palestine – and its sacred environs where so many Prophets were raised and angels have visited.

And by the Mount of Sinai, (2)

وَطُورِ سِينِينَ ﴿٢﴾

An oath by Mount Sinai, which is where Allah, glory be to Him, spoke to Moses. Sinai is put for Sīnīn, one of the names of that mountain, the other being Sīnā.

The oath is by the material sustenance of Allah that is fruit, and the spiritual blessing that is Messengership.

And by this secure land, (3)

وَهَـٰذَا ٱلۡبَلَدِ ٱلۡأَمِينِ ﴿٣﴾

That is, Makkah; secure against fear.

We certainly created the human in a most beautiful stature, (4)

لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا ٱلۡإِنسَـٰنَ فِيٓ أَحۡسَنِ تَقۡوِيمٖ ﴿٤﴾

This is the consequent of the oath. 'Stature' is given for *taqwīm*, meaning to make or transform a thing into all that it is appropriate for it in terms of formation and justification. It means that the human being is created to the best of models in regard both to his sensory, apparent aspects, and to his intellectual and spiritual capacities.

Then We reverted him as lowest of low, (5)

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَـٰهُ أَسْفَلَ سَـٰفِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

That is, Allah leaves him and does not favour him with the hidden graces until he reverts to the farthest abyss, and becomes the lowest of human beings. It means that the human being has this quality of reversion when he turns away from faith and guidance and follows instead desires and lusts.

Save those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, for theirs is a wage without end. (6)

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّـٰلِحَـٰتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٦﴾

Except those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and the day of resurrection, and perform good deeds, and refrain from evil works. Theirs is a wage, a reward, in the hereafter that will never be cut off, but is perpetual and everlasting in infinity.

So what can belie thee after this about the requital? (7)

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِٱلدِّينِ ﴿٧﴾

O thou the human, after these proofs and signs and explanations about the two sides of man, his deliverance and his destruction, what can make you think that the requital, the recompensing of the hereafter, is a lie? In other words, what is it that will make you consider the recompense a lie, after you have understood the lofty and base tendencies within man? It is like a teacher who has explained the benefits of passing an exam and the harm in failure, asking what then could make his pupil neglect his lessons.

Is Allah not the wisest of judges? (8)

أَلَيْسَ ٱللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ ٱلْحَـٰكِمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

That is, the most just and fair in judging, more just than any other judge. For He has determined these two types of recompense: he who is good has a reward without end, while he who is evil reverts to the far outreaches of deviation.

Surah al-ᶜAlaq (96)
‘The Blood-Clot’

سورة العلق

This is the first surah that descended to the Messenger of Allah, at Makkah, as is commonly accepted. It derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *ᶜalaq*, meaning ‘blood-clot’. Like the other Makkan surahs it concerns matters of faith and its corollaries. As the previous surah dealt with man's creation in the best stature, so this surah emphasises this matter.

There is no doubt but that the order of the surahs, as has been narrated in many reports, took place at the command of the Messenger of Allah, as indeed was the inclusion of each verse within a particular surah. The naming of each surah with its particular name also took place under his direction, *may Allah bless him and his family*. This is not out of keeping with the descent of the surahs having taken place in a different order. Now, as to what was done by Abu Bakr and ᶜUthmān, such that it became commonly held view that they had collated the Qur’an: during the time of the Messenger, each person had written down what he knew of the Qur’an, so the two of them arranged for each copy to be compared to an original copy ordered and arranged according to the instructions of the Messenger of Allah during his lifetime. [More details in this respect are given in other works of the author such as “The Qur’an, when was it compiled?” which is available on www.ImamShirazi.com.]

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah*** than whose name, the name of none is more worthy of beginning by. In His hand is the beginning and the end, for He is the Originator and the Resurrector.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows by His mercy on all people and all things.

Recite, in the name of thy Lord, who created, (1)

ٱقۡرَأۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾

Recite, O Messenger of Allah, the Qur’an, starting your recitation by the name of your Lord; for whatever anyone else recites without the name of Allah, you, O Messenger, recite *By the name of Allah.* It is narrated that when the archangel Gabriel – for the first time – descended to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family,* at Mount Ḥira, Makkah, and said to him ‘Recite.’ He

said, 'I will recite, but I am not a reciter.' The angel then said *'Recite, by the name of your Lord …'*

Created the human from a blood-clot. (2) خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِنۡ عَلَقٍ ۝٢

Here the act of creation is particular, rather than being general and universal as in the previous verse. 'Blood-clot' is given for [c]*alaq*, which is the thick clot of blood that sperm becomes after it is established in the womb. That is the origin of man.

Recite, and thy Lord is the Most Munificent, (3) ٱقۡرَأۡ وَرَبُّكَ ٱلۡأَكۡرَمُ ۝٣

Recite, emphasizing recitation. Thy Lord, O Messenger, is the most noble and beneficent. More noble and more munificent than any other. An instance of His munificence is His creating man from that clot and then raising him to the lofty heights.

Who taught by the pen, (4) ٱلَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِٱلۡقَلَمِ ۝٤

He teaches knowledge and science, by means of the pen. For had Allah not created the pen and not taught man how to use it, man would have remained in the depths of ignorance and vice. So from Allah, glory be to Him, comes recitation ('*Recite ...*'), and from Him comes scripture ('...*teaches by the pen* ...'), and from Him comes man's origin ('...*from a blood-clot* ...), and from Him comes man's elevation to perfection.

Taught the human what he knew not. (5) عَلَّمَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مَا لَمۡ يَعۡلَمۡ ۝٥

That is, He teaches man a variety of sciences, lore and skills.

Is man grateful for this magnificent blessing of Allah, glory be to Him, in creating him from nothing and then bringing him to the highest level of perfection, from ignorance to knowledge and guidance?

Nay, indeed the human will transgress, (6) كَلَّآ إِنَّ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطۡغَىٰٓ ۝٦

Nay, the human does not give thanks, but rather transgresses, over-steps the limits and is arrogant towards his Lord.

As he sees himself enriched; (7) أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسۡتَغۡنَىٰٓ ۝٧

For he considers himself enriched in his body and wealth, and supposes that being so rich he has no need of his Lord.

Indeed to thy Lord is the return. (8) إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلرُّجۡعَىٰٓ ۝٨

The whole of creation returns to Him, the Most High; that is, to His reckoning and recompenses. And amongst those who return to Him is the inordinate, who transgresses against Allah, glory be to Him.

Have thou seen him who forbids (9) أَرَءَيۡتَ ٱلَّذِي يَنۡهَىٰ ۝٩

Have you seen, O Messenger, him who is so inordinate that he forbids ...

A devotee when he prays? (10) عَبۡدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰٓ ۝١٠

'devotee' is used for *ᶜabd.* He is not content with transgressing against Allah and forsaking the prayer himself, but he seeks to prevent others when they perform the prayer. Have you seen this man, O Messenger? The question form is used to convey a reprimand towards that forbidding man and to warn him.

According to Shaykh Qummi it was Walīd ibn Mughayrah who would prevent people from prayer and from obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and so the verse was revealed.

In another narration it is recorded that Abu Jahl asked his companions if Muhammad had prostrated himself amongst them. They said that he had. He swore that if he ever saw him doing that he would stamp on his neck. So when it was pointed out to him that Muhammad was praying, he rushed off to stamp on the neck of the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family.* Yet he came back to them having turned back on his intention and not doing it. They asked him what was the matter with him. He said that he had seen between himself and the Messenger a trench full of fire and terror. Hearing of it the Messenger said that had he done so the angels would have seized him piece by piece. And then this verse was revealed; *'Have thou seen him who forbids'.* The implicit meaning of this verse is: 'Have you seen him who forbids prayer? And do you know the recompense of what he does?' All to convey the gravity of the sinfulness of this action.

Have thou seen if he was on the guidance? (11) أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَانَ عَلَى ٱلْهُدَىٰٓ ﴿١١﴾

The address is to the Messenger. 'he' is in reference to the devotee performing the prayer, i.e. the Messenger. The āyah asks, 'was his prayer not in accordance to the command of Allah, glory be to Him?'

Or bids to guardfulness? (12) أَوْ أَمَرَ بِٱلتَّقْوَىٰٓ ﴿١٢﴾

The devotee or servant bids to guardfulness (*taqwā*), fear of God, glory be to Him, by shunning what He forbids. What then is the destination of that person who forbids the prayer? His destination is the chastisement.

Have thou seen if he belies and turns away? (13) أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰٓ ﴿١٣﴾

Have you seen, O Messenger, whether that person who forbids the prayer – Abu Jahl or Walīd – belies the signs of Allah and His Messenger, and turns away from the truth? What will his recompense be?

Does he not know that Allah sees? (14) أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

Does that person not know that Allah sees his actions, his prohibiting the prayer and his calling the truth a lie and turning away from it? Does he not know the return of such evil? How does he forbid, disbelieve and sin, when the recompense of whoever does such is the fire and the punishment?

Nay, if he ceases not, We shall definitely seize him by the forelock, (15) كَلَّا لَئِن لَّمْ يَنتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًۢا بِٱلنَّاصِيَةِ ﴿١٥﴾

Nay, the affair is not as he supposes in that he will not be recompensed for his evil works. But rather if he does not stop himself from these evil deeds he will be pulled by the forelock to the fire. The forelock is the hair growing at the front of the head. It is the easiest to seize and to lead away the person thus seized.

A lying, erring forelock. (16) نَاصِيَةٍ كَٰذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

Attributing lying and error to the forelock is a metaphorical device, of the type that attributes to a part what is attributed to the whole, like where Allah says *'a believing neck ...'* [4: 92] The meaning is that it is the possessor of the forelock who is a liar and mistaken in his deeds.

So let him call on his assembly, (17) فَلۡيَدۡعُ نَادِيَهُۥ ۝١٧

Let that man who forbids the prayer then call on all his friends and associates. 'assembly' is given for *nādī,* meaning the place where a group or circle gathers, to which some of them call others. The usage is metaphorical, as in His phrase *'...ask the city'* [12: 82] The meaning is: let him call on all his circle: can they save him from the grip of Allah, glory be to Him?

It is narrated from Ibn ᶜAbbās that when Abu Jahl came to the Messenger of Allah, the Messenger chided him. So Abu Jahl said 'Do you chide me, when by Allah you know that no one has more of an 'assembly' than I?' And so Allah sent down this verse.

We shall call the thrusters. (18) سَنَدۡعُ ٱلزَّبَانِيَةَ ۝١٨

That is, Allah shall call the angels who serve at the fire, so that they seize that forbidding person. And he may call on his associates, so that it becomes clear who shall overcome the other. And this is a warning to him for there is none can save a person from the grip of Allah, glory be to Him. 'Thrusters' is given for *zabāniya*, the angels who thrust the sinners into hell.

Nay, obey him not, and prostrate and seek closeness.* ۩ *(19) كَلَّا لَا تُطِعۡهُ وَٱسۡجُدۡ وَٱقۡتَرِب ۩ ۝١٩

Nay, the issue is not as this forbidder claims. O Messenger, do not obey this person who seeks to prevent you from performing the prayer. But rather prostrate to Allah, glory be to Him. Or it means humble yourself before Him through the prayer and suchlike. And seek proximity and the satisfaction of Allah, glory be to Him, through obedience and worship.

This is one of the four 'Resolute' surahs *(ᶜazā'im)* bearing a prostration verse, the recitation of which necessitates an obligatory prostration, and this is the prostration verse. [The four 'Resolute' surahs are: al-Sajdah (Prostration), verse # 32; Fuṣṣilat (Expounded), # 41; al-Najm (The Star), # 53; and al-ᶜAlaq (the Blood-Clot), # 96] It is obligatory to perform prostration when one reads or hears the prostration verse of any of these four 'Resolute' surahs.

Surah al-Qadr (97) ‘The Decree’

سورة القدر

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *qadr*, meaning ‘decree’, ‘determination’, or ‘ordinance’. The surah is either Makkan, as its content would suggest, or Madinan. In either case, it comprises matters of faith, and as Surah al-ᶜAlaq concluded on the theme of seeking nearness to Allah, glory be to Him, so this surah clarifies that to seek proximity on the night of Qadr is superior to seeking proximity to Him, glory be to Him, at other times.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … We seek help by the name of the God, that He be a helper to us in our affairs.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows mercy on the servants and graces them with what conceals their slips and with what fills their voids.

Indeed We sent it down on the night of Qadr; (1)

إِنَّآ أَنزَلۡنَٰهُ فِي لَيۡلَةِ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ ۝١

'It' refers to the Qur'an, as is clear from the tone of the surah. The use of the plural form 'We' is for the sake of magnification and gravity, as it is customary for every leader to speak of himself and his followers, and from this the plural form is borrowed to deliver a sense of grandeur. The night of Qadr is the nineteenth or the twenty-first or the twenty-third of the blessed month of Ramaḍān; it was on one of these three nights that the Qur'an descended in its entirety to the 'constructed house' (*bayt al-maᶜmūr*) in the fourth sky. It was then sent down to the Messenger in stages over a period of twenty-three years. Or perhaps the meaning is that its descent in its entirety to the heart of the Messenger was on this night, and then Gabriel brought it in instalments on the appropriate occasions over twenty-three years. The night is called ‘Qadr’ so as to give gravity to the acts of worship performed during this night. [It is reported that when the *maᶜsūm* (impeccable) Imam was asked to specify which of these was the night of Qadr, the Imam replied do whatever you can in terms of supplications and humbleness before Allah during these nights. [This was to encourage the people to spend more time seeking nearness to the Almighty.]]

It is recorded in the narrations that each year on this night masses of angels descend with the ordinances for the following year to the living Imām of the twelve Imāms, *peace be upon them*, who succeeded the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, so that the Imām knows what Allah, glory be to Him, has determined for every soul for that year in the way of their appointments with death, their sustenance, their actions and the other matters concerning them. This does not mean the Imams are like the Messenger in receiving the revelation, for Gabriel descended to Maryam who was not a Messenger. Rather this is an honour accorded by Allah, glory be to Him, to the Imām who is His successor or vicegerent on the earth after the Messenger. In this age of ours the angels descend with the ordinances, on the night of Qadr, to the Imām Mahdi the Awaited, *may Allah expedite his reappearance.*

And what will make thee comprehend what is the night of Qadr? (2)

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ ۝٢

This affords an intensified sense of magnification of its rank and value.

The night of Qadr is better than a thousand months; (3)

لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡ أَلۡفِ شَهۡرٍ ۝٣

That is, good deeds performed during the night of Qadr are better than good deeds performed throughout a thousand months, more than eighty years. For certain periods are superior to other periods in regard to the actions that take place within them. Or it may mean that this night in which the Qur'an descended is better than a thousand months on account of the magnificent event that then took place, namely, the descent of the Qur'an.

The angels and the Spirit descend within it with the permission of their Lord on every affair; (4)

تَنَزَّلُ ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذۡنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمۡرٍ ۝٤

The Spirit, who is the greatest angel, or the archangel Gabriel, and the other angels descend during the night of Qadr with the permission of Allah, who grants them permission to visit the Messenger and after him the Imams so as to explain the ordinances of the servants.

On every affair: Gabriel and the other angels present themselves to the Messenger during this night bearing news of every earthly affair concerning the guidance, the order, the arrangements, the justifications, good fortune and

misfortune. And in the same way the process continues and they present themselves with the same gifts to the living Imam.

Peace it is until the break of dawn. (5) سَلَٰمٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطۡلَعِ ٱلۡفَجۡرِ ۝٥

On this night is determined the path of universal peace for the world: security of the soul from pollution, of the body from illness, the security of society from corruption, and the security of the intellect from nonsense. Or the meaning is that the night is itself peace, in that it is free of distress and affliction, and that nothing is determined except peace. All this until the break of dawn, when the angels stop their descent and the task is completed. It is amongst the beloved acts to supplicate and implore during this night, in remembrance of the commencement of the revelation, and seeking for goodness to be determined for oneself in the year ahead.

Surah al-Bayyinah (98)
‘The Clarification’

سورة البينة

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-bayyinah*, meaning the clear explanation. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. Yet there is a view that the surah was sent down at Madinah, a view which is supported by certain portents. In either case, whereas Surah al-Qadr explained how the Qur’an was revealed during the night of Qadr, this surah explains that the disbelievers will continue in their disbelief and their straying until presented with the Qur’an, when some of them will be guided by it.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** that essence deserving of all glory and magnification.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, whose mercy He directs towards everything by bestowing it with creation and with guidance as to the path of its life, and who is particularly merciful towards humans by guiding them and forgiving their mistakes if they repent and reform themselves.

Those who disbelieve, such as the Book-folk and the polytheists, will not desist until the clarification comes to them; (1)

لَمۡ يَكُنِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنۡ أَهۡلِ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ
وَٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ مُنفَكِّينَ حَتَّىٰ تَأۡتِيَهُمُ ٱلۡبَيِّنَةُ ۝١

‘such as’ is given for the Arabic word *min,* which here does not mean ‘from’ or ‘amongst’ for distinguishing one sect from another, but to give examples of groups or categories. The Book-folk are the Jews, Christians and the Zoroastrians. All[31] Book-folk have disbelieved by partnering with Allah a son,

[31] By ‘all’ it is not meant to be every single one of them, but the overwhelming majority of them, for it is common in Arabic that when the majority have something in common, it is said that they ‘all’ have that feature. Before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family,* there were those amongst the followers of the prophet Jesus *peace be upon him,* who upheld his true and uncorrupted teachings – e.g. Jesus confirming monotheism (never claiming divinity) and giving the news of the coming of the final messenger of God – and therefore they are not considered as having disbelieved, but those who believe in such concepts as trinity have disbelieved.

or a partner, or qualities that compromise the glory of His Godhead. They, along with the idolaters who set up partners with God and worship idols, will not disengage from their disbelief and depart from it before they receive the clarification. By 'clarification' (*bayyinah,* i.e. the proof and argument) it is meant the Sacred Qur'an and the Noble Messenger, prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. Otherwise, there is no place for them to discern the realities after they have distorted their books, and changed their religion.

The revelation then explains what is meant by the clear explanation:

A Messenger from Allah reciting purified scriptures, (2)

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ يَتۡلُواْ صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً ۝٢

A Messenger raised by Allah, glory be to Him, who recites to them the purified scripture, the sacred Qur'an, which is pure and free from disbelief, polytheism, and false, unworthy attributions towards Allah and His Messengers. For although the Messenger recited from the depth of his heart yet he recited from the 'protected tablet' (*lawḥ al-maḥfūdh*), in contrast to the book of the two testaments.

In them are valuable books. (3)

فِيهَا كُتُبٞ قَيِّمَةٞ ۝٣

In the scriptures are valuable books. 'Book' here means subject or chapter, which is common usage, as in the book of prayer, the book of fasting and so on. Or it may be that what is meant by books here is writings, in the scripture. That is, those scriptures contain valuable subjects or writings. Or it may be that what is meant by valuable (*qayyimah*) is upright, for a meaning of *qayyimah* is to continue in the right direction.

And those granted the Book did not become divided until after there came to them the clarification. (4)

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡهُمُ ٱلۡبَيِّنَةُ ۝٤

'Those granted the book' means those granted the heavenly book. They only became divided over the issue of the Messenger or over their previous religion, splitting into many groups each with its own path and its own school, after the final argument was presented to them, and all was clear. Despite this, they became divided, due to their desires and jealousy.

Yet Allah only commanded them to worship Him and to follow His path, for:

They were not commanded save to worship Allah, dedicating to Him the religion, as true believers, and to establish the prayer and give the zakat; and that is the religion of the valuable. (5)

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخۡلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ
حُنَفَآءَ وَيُقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤۡتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَۚ وَذَٰلِكَ
دِينُ ٱلۡقَيِّمَةِ ٥

They were only expected to worship the One God, walking their path sincerely for Him, without additions or deletions, without deviation or polytheism of any kind, and while furthering their natural inclination towards Allah. 'True believers' is given for *ḥunafā*, the plural of *ḥanīf*, meaning to side with the truth away from evil, and incline away from false religions and spurious paths. 'Establish the prayer' in the verse means to be constant in establishing the prayer. 'Give the zakāt' has either the unconditional meaning of generally giving in good causes, or the legislated giving, that was part of the previous religions. The religion that comprehends these articles ***is the religion of the valuable***; that is, the religion of the valuable books mentioned in the earlier verse.

Indeed those who disbelieve – the Book-folk and the polytheists – are in the fire of Hell, eternal in it; they are the worst of creation. (6)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنۡ أَهۡلِ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ وَٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ
فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمۡ شَرُّ
ٱلۡبَرِيَّةِ ٦

Those of the Book-folk and the polytheists who persist in their disbelief and do not come to believe in the final Messenger of Allah are in the fire of Hell in the afterlife and will remain there forever. They will be considered as the worst of creation since they recognised the final revelation of the Almighty while in this life, but refused to accept it.

Indeed those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, they are the best of creation. (7)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ
هُمۡ خَيۡرُ ٱلۡبَرِيَّةِ ٧

Those who believe in Allah and His final Messenger and the last day and do good deeds, and who do not perform corrupt works, are the best of all creatures, for they both carried the correct belief and did the good deeds. In

contrast to them are those who believe but disobey, they are neither evil to the extent of the previous group nor good to that of this.

Their recompense is with their Lord: perpetual gardens, rivers flowing beneath them, eternal in them, forever; Allah is content with them and they are content with Him; this is for whosoever fears his Lord. (8)

جَزَآؤُهُمۡ عِندَ رَبِّهِمۡ جَنَّـٰتُ عَدۡنٍ تَجۡرِى مِن
تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَـٰرُ خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًاۖ رَّضِىَ ٱللَّهُ
عَنۡهُمۡ وَرَضُواْ عَنۡهُۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنۡ خَشِىَ رَبَّهُۥ ﴿٨﴾

Their recompense is with their Lord; that is, at the place He has prepared for their reckoning and reward, for He occupies no place.

perpetual gardens beneath which rivers flow, under the trees and palaces of which flow rivers of honey, wine, milk and water.

eternal in them, forever: they stay there and never depart.

Allah is content with them Allah is pleased and satisfied with them on account of their having served and worshipped Him.

and they are content with Him; They too are pleased and satisfied with Him, for He will have blessed them and bestowed upon them goodness and felicity.

this is for whosoever fears his Lord. This reward and mercy is for whoever fears Allah, and therefore does not sin against Him and does not perform the deeds that violate His commands.

Surah al-Zalzalah (99)

'The Earthquake'

سورة الزلزلة

This surah is also called al-Zilzāl, both names being nouns related to the verb-form *zulzilat*, meaning to quake. There is disagreement as to whether the surah is Madinan or Makkan, but it deals with matters of faith which indicates that it is Makkan. As Surah al-Bayyinah concluded on the theme of the recompense of the obedient in paradise and of the disobedient in the fire, this surah opens on the theme of the conditions of the hour and the signs of the resurrection, that is, the day of separation and requital.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

A beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** who is the First, for there is none before Him nor with Him; corresponding to beginning a thing in the world of action, by placing the name of Allah, glory be to Him, as a maxim.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows His mercy on whoever seeks His mercy, and on those who do not seek it, although there is a difference between them in the extent of His bestowal and in the recompenses and suchlike.

When the earth is shaken with its shaking, (1)

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ ٱلْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا ﴿١﴾

That is, when it moves with its violent movement, and is overturned with a dire overturning.

And the earth sends forth its burdens, (2)

وَأَخْرَجَتِ ٱلْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا ﴿٢﴾

Everything will come out of the earth: its minerals and all that is buried within it and of course the bodies and suchlike; for it will be turned inside-out at the time of the hour.

And man will say, 'What is with it?' (3)

وَقَالَ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ مَا لَهَا ﴿٣﴾

On that day people will be in amazement at what is happening to the earth, and will ask what has made it shake and be turned upside down and cast out whatever was within it.

That day it will report its accounts, (4) يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا ﴿٤﴾

That day is the day of resurrection. It is stated that the Messenger asked his followers whether they knew what are its accounts. They said that Allah and His Messenger knew best. He said: 'Its accounts are that it will testify as to every person and what he has done on its surface.'

And all of this shaking and overturning and casting out and reporting is performed by the earth on account of:

In that thy Lord has inspired it. (5) بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا ﴿٥﴾

Your Lord, O Messenger of Allah, inspires the earth to do that. The skies and the earth are obedient to Allah, glory be to Him, in whatever He commands, as He says: *'The two said, 'We come obediently."* [41: 12]

The day when humankind issue forth disparately to be shown their deeds. (6) يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ ٱلنَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا۟ أَعْمَـٰلَهُمْ ﴿٦﴾

On the day of resurrection mankind will come forth from their graves to the rising-ground in separated groups, some for a good ending others for a bad one. They will be shown their deeds and each will be rewarded for his deeds.

So he who does a particle's weight of good will see it, (7) فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٧﴾

He who has performed the tiniest good deed in the world will see its reward on that day. 'Particle' is given for *dharrah*, meaning the tiny specks visible in a ray of light.

And he who does a particle's weight of evil will see it. (8) وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٨﴾

He who is guilty of evil, disbelief and disobedience, will see its reward that day. None will be in the slightest way wronged. The only exception is if a doer of wrong is saved by intercession, if he qualified for it. Or if a doer of a good is disqualified from receiving the reward of that good by the weight of his evil deeds, i.e. his evil deeds annul his good ones.

Surah al-ᶜĀdiyāt (100)
'The Chargers'

سورة العاديات

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *al-ᶜādiyāt*, meaning horses when they are galloping on a charge. Like the other Madinan surahs it indicates matters that are linked by the order of creation to the area of belief. Like the previous surah, this surah contains mention of the requital.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

We begin ***by the name of Allah,*** for it to be a blessed beginning; for nothing is begun in the name of Allah without goodness being linked to it, by His word and His grace.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful, who blesses with mercy the servants, and graces them with felicity and bountifulness.

By the chargers, snorting, (1)

وَٱلۡعَٰدِيَٰتِ ضَبۡحٗا ١

That is, by the horses that charge in the way of Allah for *jihād*. By 'snort' (*ḍabḥ*) is meant the sound heard from a hollow within horses when they gallop.

By the sparkers, igniting, (2)

فَٱلۡمُورِيَٰتِ قَدۡحٗا ٢

That is, the oath is by the horses sparking and making fire appear, by the striking of their hooves upon stones. Igniting (*qadḥan*), like the striking of a primitive fire.

By the attackers, of a morn, (3)

فَٱلۡمُغِيرَٰتِ صُبۡحٗا ٣

That is, the oath is by the horses attacking the enemy during the early hours of the morning, after the warriors or *mujāhidin* have journeyed through the night; so that as soon as it is morning they attack.

Thus leaving there a trail of dust. (4)

فَأَثَرۡنَ بِهِۦ نَقۡعٗا ٤

That is, by their chase against the enemy the horses raise a cloud of dust that remains over the place they have passed.

Then cleaving to the centre of it en masse, (5) فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِۦ جَمْعًا ۝

‘it’ is in reference to the time and place of the attack. The horses then attack the centre of that place, where the enemy are arranged, so as to gain victory over the enemy, for taking them unexpectedly, they fall on them at their centre and create havoc and confusion amongst them. These āyāt descended about the battle of Dhāt al-Salāsil, in the year 8 AH, circa 630 CE.

As it is written in *Qādat al-Islam* [by the author], the background to the aforementioned battle is that when a number of tribes, united to help the disbelievers in their fight against the Muslims in the battle of Mu’tah, where the latter sustained considerable losses. After the battle of Mu’tah, the armed forces of these tribes – which swelled to more than twelve thousands – regrouped to fight the Muslims. In response, the Prophet formed a squadron of four thousands to fight off the disbelievers and repel their threat. The ensuing battle became known as Dhāt al-Salāsil. The Prophet put Abu Bakr in charge of the troops, and ordered the regiment to fight the enemy forces. Abu Bakr led the squadron to the battlefield area, where he was met by a delegation of the opposing forces who, as part of their psychological warfare, warned him of a fierce battle and great losses if he fought them, given their superior forces. Abu Bakr was filled with fear and returned, which angered the Prophet greatly. The Prophet then put ᶜUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in command of the regiment and he warned them against cowardice. But ᶜUmar showed cowardice just as his brother did before, “and he returned a failure”. The Prophet then put ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜĀṣṣ at the helm and ordered the troops under his command, but he too returned to the prophet a failure. The Prophet then decided to put the squadron under the leadership of Amir-al-Mu’minin (Commander of the Believers) Imām Ali, and he urged him in the same way he had urged others against cowardice. The Prophet said to Imam Ali, “it is inevitable that Allah will bring about victory through your hands.” Imam Ali *peace be upon him* led the troops to a stop near their camp such that they could see them and he could see them. Some one hundred fighters came to the camping site of the Imām and warned him of the consequences if he were to fight them. Imam Ali invited them to Islam, but they refused and said they would kill them all tomorrow, and left for their camp in preparation for the battle ahead. Imam Ali then ordered the troops to get ready, and so they prepared themselves fully for the following day. At the breaking of dawn, the performed their dawn or *fajr* prayers, and then Imam Ali ordered the troops to launch the attack against them while he was leading the charge. The opposing forces were not fully

prepared and could not stand up to the onslaught against them. By the time the sun had arisen, the Muslim forces were counting the prisoners and the spoils of war. The victorious Muslim troops returned to Madinah and the Prophet and the Muslims received Imam Ali and his troops. It was then that descended the Surah al-ᶜĀdiyāt.

Swearing by the aforementioned oaths . . .

Indeed! Man is ungrateful to his Lord (6) إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ لِرَبِّهِۦ لَكَنُودٌ ﴿٦﴾

Ungrateful is to deny the truth.

And to that he indeed bears witness (7) وَإِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

He bears witness to that denial. For man is well aware of 'what is for him and what is against him' even if he does not admit to that which is against him. It could also mean that he will bear witness to that on the day of judgement since, ﴿*their mouths are sealed up and their hands speak to Us and their feet bear witness as to what they used to do.*﴾ *[36:65]*

And verily he is vehement in his love for good things (8) وَإِنَّهُۥ لِحُبِّ ٱلْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

For he is fierce and intense in his love for all the good things in life, and this is the nature of man unless this passion is subdued through faith.

Does he not know; when what in the tombs is scattered around? (9) أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِى ٱلْقُبُورِ ﴿٩﴾

That is, the resurrection of the dead, for they are taken out of their tombs and scattered around here and there.

And what in the breasts is made manifest? (10) وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِى ٱلصُّدُورِ ﴿١٠﴾

The intentions of the people and whatever they harboured of good or evil. This is to recompense each individual according to their intentions, hidden or otherwise, and their deeds that he has brought forward. Does he not know what his fate going to be on that day? Then who can be ungrateful, disobedient and a disbeliever? The question is a form of censure and warning.

Indeed! On that day their Lord is fully informed about them. (11)

إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لَّخَبِيرُۢ ﴿١١﴾

That is, their Lord – Allah – who created them and then nourished and sustained the people is well informed and well aware, and on that day – the Day of Judgment – He shall recompense each individual according to their intentions and deeds. 'On the day' is in conjunction with the reward being handed out, for otherwise He is fully aware and informed about everything at all times.

Surah al-Qāriᶜah (101) سورة القارعة
'The Shudderer'

Al-qāriᶜah, meaning one that shudders, or makes shudder. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. As Surah al-ᶜĀdiyāt concluded by delivering a warning to the disobedient, this surah explains the events of the resurrection, of which the warning is delivered.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

We begin ***by the name of Allah,*** He who comprises all the qualities of perfection; that we place it as a maxim for ourselves in our actions and enterprises. For there is nothing more worthy of being placed as a maxim for one who acknowledges his Lord.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who graces His servants with mercy and forgiveness.

The Shudderer! (1) ٱلۡقَارِعَةُ ١

The Shudderer (*al-qāriᶜah*) is one of the names of the resurrection, for that event will make the hearts shudder with fear, and humankind will shudder at the chastisement, and the mountains will shudder till they are flat.

What is the Shudderer? (2) مَا ٱلۡقَارِعَةُ ٢

This question is rhetorical, having the purpose of increasing its status and giving gravity to its importance.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the Shudderer? (3) وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡقَارِعَةُ ٣

Again, this is for heightening its grandeur. It means that it is so awesome that you cannot know it, cannot understand it, until you see it.

The day when humankind will be like the scattered swarm, (4) يَوۡمَ يَكُونُ ٱلنَّاسُ كَٱلۡفَرَاشِ ٱلۡمَبۡثُوثِ ٤

'Swarm' is given for *al-farāsh*, meaning the tumult of locusts when they swarm, some of them above others. 'Scattered' is given for *mabthūth*. For that day people will be like a swarm in their numbers, their agitation and their diffusion.

And the mountains will be like teased wool. (5) وَتَكُونُ ٱلۡجِبَالُ كَٱلۡعِهۡنِ ٱلۡمَنفُوشِ ٥

The mountains will be plucked from their positions and shattered till they are like light, soft, coloured wool. Coloured on account of how the mountains are coloured, some white, some red, some black and so on.

So as for him whose balances are heavy: (6) فَأَمَّا مَن ثَقُلَتۡ مَوَٰزِينُهُۥ ٦

That is, whose good deeds are heavier and many. ‘Balances’ is given for *māwazīn*, which is in the plural form on account of there being different balances, scales, for every good act. So there is a balance for the prayer, a balance for doing good to parents, and so on. ‘Balances’ is used for the meter to indicate the measure of one’s good deeds and their extent, or the lack of them.

So he is in a contented life. (7) فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٖ رَّاضِيَةٖ ٧

That is, his life will be possessed of pleasure, giving pleasure to he who leads it. The attribution of being pleased to the life itself – when clearly it is the person leading that life who is pleased – is metaphoric.

But as for him whose balances are light: (8) وَأَمَّا مَنۡ خَفَّتۡ مَوَٰزِينُهُۥ ٨

His acts of goodness few, his evil deeds many:

His home is an abyss. (9) فَأُمُّهُۥ هَاوِيَةٞ ٩

His home is the fire. Just as a child is accommodated by his mother so shall the disobedient be accommodated by hell.

And what will make thee comprehend what that is? (10) وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا هِيَهۡ ١٠

The question form has the purpose of giving grandeur and importance to the chastisement of the fire. Even the Prophet, or the listener, does not comprehend the reality of it, or the details of its terrors. [During one of his Ascensions, the Prophet saw and understood the terror of the fire.]

A raging fire! (11) نَارٌ حَامِيَةُۢ ١١

A fire that has reached the peak of its intensity, its heat and its blaze.

Surah al-Takāthur (102)
'Rivalry'

سورة التكاثر

The surah derives its name from its containing the word *takāthur*, meaning the worldly increase that is competed for. Over whether it is sent down at Makkah or at Madinah there is disagreement. As Surah al-Qāriᶜah concluded on the theme of the fire, this surah opens on the topic of man's heedlessness of the fire.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

A beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** whose is everything, and than whom none is more worthy of beginning by his name.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows mercy on the servants with grace and bounty.

Rivalry distracts ye (1)

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾

You are distracted from obedience to Allah and from worshipping Him, O people, by your wealth, your sons, and other things connected to the world, and by the pride and rivalry they evoke in you.

Until ye visit the graves; (2)

حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾

When visiting graves a person realizes the finite nature of the world, and the futility of rivalry and competition over worldly things and affairs. Or it may mean until you are overtaken by death, in which case the term 'visit' the graves denotes that the graves too are not eternal, for those in them are transported to the hereafter.

Nay, soon ye shall know, (3)

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Things are not as you suppose for you to engage in rivalry. Soon you shall know the result of your being engrossed in the world, and of your neglect of the hereafter. This is a warning.

Again nay, soon ye shall know. (4)

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Repeated for the sake of emphasis and to suggest self-restraint from worldly rivalry on account of its dire consequences.

Nay, if ye knew with a knowledge of certainty, (5)

كَلَّا لَوۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ عِلۡمَ ٱلۡيَقِينِ ٥

Nay, the affair is not as you people think. If you knew with a sure and certain knowledge, so that you were certain of the hereafter rather than having a mere deductive knowledge of it, you would know that worldly rivalry is futile, and that attention to the hereafter is the important matter.

You would surely see the inferno; (6)

لَتَرَوُنَّ ٱلۡجَحِيمَ ٦

You would see it with the vision of the heart, as if you are witnesses of it, and would fear being occupied with other than its affairs and concerns. Then you would see no benefit in worldly rivalry and pride.

Then you would surely see it with the eye of certainty, (7)

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيۡنَ ٱلۡيَقِينِ ٧

Then, after much deliberation on the hell and seeing it with the heart, you see the hell with the eye of certainty, a certainty that is just like seeing it. This is as stated by the Amir-al-Mu’minin, Imam Ali, *peace be upon him,* describing the righteous and their attributes that: ‘Their faith in Paradise is like he who has seen it and has enjoyed its bliss, and their faith in Hell is like he who has seen it and has suffered its torment’. For the first stage is the deductive knowledge; then the experiences the heart encounters of true certainty; the certainty then ascends in the heart until the person sees that which he knows.

Then ye shall surely be questioned that day as to the blessings. (8)

ثُمَّ لَتُسۡـَٔلُنَّ يَوۡمَئِذٍ عَنِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ٨

O people, when your knowledge increases until it reaches the level of the eye of certainty, you will be questioned. For when a person's certainty increases he deliberates about his affairs, whether they are forbidden or could seem forbidden. He asks himself as to whence comes his rank and status. From the legal or from the forbidden? Thus he is like someone questioned about these affairs though it is he who questions himself. Or it is possible that the meaning is that man is questioned in the hereafter, and so too the vision of the fire, as has been narrated in some reports.

Surah al-ᶜAṣr (103)
'The Era'

سورة العصر

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *ᶜaṣr*, meaning 'era' or 'period'. Like the other Makkan surahs it undertakes to explain matters of faith. As Surah al-Takāthur concluded with a warning to whoever is distracted by worldly rivalry, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … We seek help from the name of Allah, whose are all things and who is capable of every form of assistance.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who blesses mercy on all things by creating them and perfecting them; and who blesses the human being with the forgiveness of his sins and the healing of his wounds.

By the era, (1)

وَٱلۡعَصۡرِ ١

That is, an oath by the era (*al-ᶜaṣr*), meaning the era of the Prophethood, or the era of time itself, or the era of the last Imām, on him be peace, or the afternoon, as opposed to the forenoon, like the earlier oath Allah gave, glory be to Him, 'By the forenoon ...' [93: 2] .

Mankind surely is at a loss; (2)

إِنَّ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ لَفِي خُسۡرٍ ٢

Man by the nature of things is on a path of continuing loss; as he advances towards destruction, his ethics advance in their descent. For the more a person engrosses himself in the world, so his desires and vices increase. Moreover, for every hour that passes without him engaging in goodliness he is a loser, as his capital, which enables him to acquire the loftiest level, uselessly goes up in smoke – and that is on the assumption that he does not spend that hour in disobedience.

Save those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, and encourage to the Truth and encourage to steadfastness. (3)

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلۡحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلصَّبۡرِ ٣

Except those who believe in Allah and His Prophet and what he brought; and perform good deeds without polluting them with evil works; and urge one another to recognize the Truth and act accordingly; and urge steadfastness in face of the wiles of the world. This means to be steadfast in obedience, and to be resolute against disobedience and in the face of calamity and hardship. The revelation highlights these two matters after their being a part of good deeds, on account of their dire importance as being inseparable from the life of good deeds, of which they are two pillars.

Surah al-Humazah (104)
'The Defamer'

سورة الهمزة

The surah derives its name from its containing the word *humazah*, meaning 'defamer'. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with explaining matters of faith and what is related to faith. As the previous surah mentioned man's being a loser, this surah comes to explain some of the underlying reasons for this.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** who is the First before all things.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, with a mercy that is continual and emphatic and embraces all things.

Woe to every defamer, backbiter (1)

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ۝١

Woe (*wayl*) explains the evil condition of those it is said of. 'Defamer' is given for *humazah*, which is a person who slanders others and is over-critical of people without justification. The word derives from the origin of 'breaking', as if the defamer breaks a person and destroys his well-being.

Who gathers wealth and counts it; (2)

ٱلَّذِى جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُۥ ۝٢

He amasses property from wherever and counts it, to see how it has increased since he last counted it. That is the picture of a greedy person, a sinking soul, who persists in amassing wealth; and criticises people without exception.

He reckons his wealth makes him eternal. (3)

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُۥٓ أَخْلَدَهُۥ ۝٣

He thinks his wealth will make him stay in the world and protect him from mishap. For whenever a mishap befalls him he averts it by bribery, or by giving so as to forestall the wrongs he performs, or when illness befalls him, and so on. The meaning is that his action is the action of one who reckons such, for every person knows that he will die and that he has no escape from death.

Nay, indeed he shall be hurled into the shatterer; (4)

كَلَّا ۖ لَيُنۢبَذَنَّ فِى ٱلْحُطَمَةِ ۝٤

'Shatterer' is given for *ḥuṭamah*, a name of hell. Without any consideration or sympathy the fault-finding defamer shall be hurled there. It is called shatterer as it shatters and breaks everything. For Fire shall shatter and destroy his entity and his greatness.

And what will make thee comprehend what is the shatterer? (5) وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلْحُطَمَةُ ﴿٥﴾

This is put to signify its importance and to convey the fact that it is impossible to comprehend until seen.

The explanation of what it is now follows:

The fire of Allah set ablaze, (6) نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ ﴿٦﴾

How can man appreciate the might of the fire that has been kindled by Allah, glory be to Him, who is the most capable of punishing and chastising?

Which takes over the hearts; (7) ٱلَّتِى تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةِ ﴿٧﴾

That is, it takes over the hearts to burn the place from which arise their mockery and their love of wealth and of counting it, without spending it in the way of Allah, and for good ends.

Indeed over them it is closed, (8) إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِم مُّؤْصَدَةٌ ﴿٨﴾

Its doors will be shut over those sinners so that they shall have no hope of getting out.

In extended columns. (9) فِى عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ ﴿٩﴾

They shall be fettered in extended columns. It was the practice of ancient rulers to secure prisoners to long columns built into the ground or the wall. It is to increase the punishment and chastisement.

Surah al-Fīl (105) سورة الفيل
'The Elephant'

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *fīl*, meaning elephant. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. Whereas the subject of the previous surah was Allah's chastisement of the disbelievers in the hereafter, this surah talks of His punishment of them in this world.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***By the name of Allah,*** who comprehends all the qualities of perfection.

the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows His mercy on every one.

Have thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? (1)

أَلَمۡ تَرَ كَيۡفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصۡحَٰبِ ٱلۡفِيلِ ﴿١﴾

That is, have you not heard, O Messenger, or O listener, how your Lord treated the companions of the elephant who came to destroy the Ka^c^bah. He treated them with chastisement and destruction.

Did he not put their plot astray? (2)

أَلَمۡ يَجۡعَلۡ كَيۡدَهُمۡ فِي تَضۡلِيلٖ ﴿٢﴾

That is, bring it to nothing. As if instead of being guided to its end, which was to destroy the Ka^c^bah and extinguish the light of Allah, their plot went astray, and bequeathed to them destruction and annihilation.

And sent against them birds, swallows; (3)

وَأَرۡسَلَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ طَيۡرًا أَبَابِيلَ ﴿٣﴾

'Swallows' is put for *abābīl*, a type of swallow; but the word also means flocks, either scattered or grouped together.

They stoned them with stones of petrified earth, (4)

تَرۡمِيهِم بِحِجَارَةٖ مِّن سِجِّيلٖ ﴿٤﴾

The birds pelted them with small, hard stones made of petrified earth, the severest and hardest thing that could hit a person.

So He made them like chewed husks. (5) فَجَعَلَهُمۡ كَعَصۡفٖ مَّأۡكُولِۭ ۝٥

Allah made the associates of the elephant like a grass-plant, its seeds eaten, its empty, dry husk remaining. For when the stones struck a person they rendered him empty, like a seedcase, its seed eaten.

The event behind this was that a group from the Quraysh went to trade in the territory of the king of Abyssinia. They travelled until they approached the coast where they came upon a sanctified Christian shelter, called by the Quraysh 'al-Haykal'. They set down there and gathered wood for a fire and cooked their meat. When they departed they left the fire as it was, on a gusty day. The wind took up the fire and the little church burned down. The king became angry with this and sent Abrahah with a force to destroy the Kaᶜbah. Abrahah brought an elephant with his troops. When they brought it to the door of the mosque, ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib said to the elephant, 'Do you know why they have brought you?' The elephant signified with its head to say no. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib then said to it, 'They have brought you to destroy the house of Allah; will you do it?' Again the elephant signified with its head to say no. Then the army struggled to get the elephant inside but it resisted. So they attacked it with swords and cut it. Then Allah sent his army of birds in wave after wave, who stoned them; for each bird had three stones, one in its beak and one in each of its claws. The birds hovered with wings flapping over the heads of the soldiers and propelled the stones at their heads. The stones entered the top of their heads and came out of their posteriors, and their bodies collapsed.

Surah Quraysh (106)
'Quraysh'

سورة قريش

This surah is also called *li 'īylāf* ('For the Confidence of') on account of the prominence of this and the word *Quraysh*, a name of a prominent tribe in the city of Makkah. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. As He has spoken of His protection of them from their enemies, He adds to this His grace towards them in feeding them and providing for them the means of livelihood.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

A beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** the First before all things, that it becomes a maxim for the Muslim by which he is recognised.

the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows repeated mercies on His servants in the world and in the hereafter.

For the confidence of the Quraysh, (1)

لِإِيلَٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ ﴿١﴾

'Confidence' is given for *īylāf*, the opposite of *awḥash*, to be alien, desolate and fearful. The meaning is in return for Allah having made the Ḥaram [i.e. Makkah and its surroundings] and the roads to it assuring for the Quraysh and safe, so that they feel safe and confident to travel to the Shām and the Yemen, in security and peace, with no sense of desolation or fear. [The Shām district is a province that covers today's Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.]

Their confidence while travelling in winter and summer; (2)

إِۦلَٰفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ ٱلشِّتَآءِ وَٱلصَّيْفِ ﴿٢﴾

They would travel peacefully in winter to the Yemen, for trade, and in summer for trade to the Shām. The verse clarifies the previous verse.

So they should worship the Lord of this House, (3)

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا۟ رَبَّ هَٰذَا ٱلْبَيْتِ ﴿٣﴾

This is the consequent of the words 'For the confidence ...' The house of Allah is the sanctuary at Makkah. They should worship Allah on account of the peace of mind and security with which He blessed them, so that they were able to travel contentedly each year without fear and without melancholy.

Allah then explains some of His attributes by which He especially favoured them:

Who feeds them from hunger, and secures them from fear. (4)

ٱلَّذِىٓ أَطۡعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُم مِّنۡ خَوۡفِۭ ﴿٤﴾

Allah caused their provision on their travels of summer and winter, and set up a secure sanctuary where there was nothing but peace.

It is stated in the commentary of Shaykh Qummi that the surah was sent down about the Quraysh, for their livelihood was derived from two journeys, a journey to the Yemen in winter, and a journey to the Shām in summer. From Makkah they would take certain food products and in the Shām they would purchase material and grain. During the journey and at the time of departure they would combine under the leadership of one of the leaders of the Quraysh; and that was their livelihood. But when Allah raised His Prophet they did not need to go on those journeys any longer, for the people from those areas would travel, with their goods, to visit the Prophet and perform the Hajj.

Surah al-Mā^cūn (107)
'The Assistance'

سورة الماعون

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *mā^c ūn*, meaning worldly bounties. As to whether the surah is Makkan or Madinan, views are diverse. In any case, the surah deals with matters of faith and related issues. As the previous surah spoke of Allah's blessings on the Quraysh, this surah comes to deter them from disbelief and disobedience after receiving these liberal blessings.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

We seek help ***by the name of Allah,*** that He be for us an aid in the important things in our life, and after death;

the Compassionate, the Merciful … He who has an encompassing mercy that embraces all things, in general, and believers in particular.

Have thou seen him who belies the Requital? (1)

أَرَءَيۡتَ ٱلَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِٱلدِّينِ ۝١

'Requital' is given for *dīn*, which means recompense, although it may mean the religion of Islam. The question is rhetorical, conveying outrage. It means: How does he call it a lie when there are so many signs proving its validity and its taking place?

That is he who repels the orphan, (2)

فَذَٰلِكَ ٱلَّذِي يَدُعُّ ٱلۡيَتِيمَ ۝٢

The person who calls the judgement a lie repels the orphan, puts him off with severity, instead of being kind to him. For to consider the judgement a lie results in actions that are harsh and base.

And urges not the feeding of the destitute. (3)

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلۡمِسۡكِينِ ۝٣

He does not incite and urge people to feed the destitute, whose poverty keeps them from being active and working. This urging, although other than in 'urging to the good' (*'amr bil-ma^crūf*) and suchlike it is not obligatory, nevertheless its absence indicates a spiritual bareness and a drying up of the spring of virtues in the heart, such as is inseparable from disbelief. It is related

that some of the disbelievers of the Quraysh acted like this when an orphan approached them seeking help; they would repel him harshly, and would act the same way with the poor.

[He who repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the pauper *is* the one who belies the Requital. It is the essence of belief that matters, and the mere claim is not sufficient, as this is emphasised in the following:]

So woe to those who pray, (4)

فَوَيۡلٞ لِّلۡمُصَلِّينَ ٤

Since repelling the orphan and not urging the feeding of the poor are cause for censure and rebuke, it is clear that whoever acts in the name of Islam and yet is far from Islam is most deserving of the censure and rebuke. For the hypocrite is in a worse condition than the disbeliever.

Those who are neglectful of their prayer, (5)

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ عَن صَلَاتِهِمۡ سَاهُونَ ٥

That is, they are heedless of their prayers and do not give attention to their prayers, for lack of attention occasions neglect.

Those who show off, (6)

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ يُرَآءُونَ ٦

When they pray they pray for the sake of being seen, not for the sake of Allah, glory be to Him. Some have said that the meaning is that when there was none to see them they would not pray, but when there was someone there they would pray to be seen.

And withhold assistance. (7)

وَيَمۡنَعُونَ ٱلۡمَاعُونَ ٧

‘Assistance’ is given for *māʿūn*, meaning everything in which there is a benefit for people. The meaning is that they refuse to part with their good things, which is caused by their lacking of firm faith in the heart.

Surah al-Kawthar (108)
'The Abundance'

سورة الكوثر

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *kawthar*, meaning 'abundance'. There are differing views about whether the surah is Makkan or Madinan. The surah concerns the Prophet, *may Allah bless him and his family*. Perhaps the connection between this and the previous surah is the discussion of refusing and abundance; for they refused beneficence and Allah, glory be to Him, gives goodness in abundance. Or the connection may be that they neglected the prayer and denied charity, while here the Prophet is commanded to institute the prayer and charity.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***By the name of Allah,*** in whose name nothing is begun but that it is blessed by it.

*... **the Compassionate, the Merciful***, who bestows mercy and forgiveness.

Indeed We have granted thee Abundance. (1)

إِنَّآ أَعۡطَيۡنَٰكَ ٱلۡكَوۡثَرَ ۝١

O Messenger, We have granted you *kawthar*, from *kathrah*, meaning abundance. It is said that the surah was occasioned by one al-ᶜĀṣṣ ibn Wa'il al-Sahmi who, seeing the Prophet leaving the sacred mosque went over and spoke with him while the notables of the Quraysh were sitting. So when he went in they asked him who he was talking to. He said 'With the *abtar'*, meaning the Prophet; for the Quraysh would call one without an offspring *abtar*, meaning 'cut off', in the sense of being without a son to continue his renown, as by this time ᶜAbdullāh the son of the Prophet by Khadijah, *peace be on her*, had died. So this surah was descended. For this reason, among the interpretations of *al-kawthar* is that it means the Lady Fāṭimah, *on her be peace,* who was the Prophet's route to a plentiful posterity. But since the word *kawthar* means plentiful bounties, and is general, its meaning includes prophethood and knowledge, posterity, the pool of *Kawthar* in the hereafter and the other meanings included by the general term *kawthar*.

So pray to thy Lord and slaughter; (2)

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَٱنۡحَرۡ ۝٢

Pray, O Messenger of Allah, in thanks for this great blessing. And slaughter camels to feed humankind, for Allah loves the feeding of food to people. 'Slaughter' is given for *anḥar*, of *naḥr* which is upper portion of the chest or the throat area. Alternatively *anḥar* may mean raising the hands to the neck in the formal saying of *Allahu akbar*, or *takbir*, as has been narrated, for in that there is submissiveness to Allah, glory be to Him, which is appropriate when giving thanks for His favour of granting abundance.

Indeed thy loather he is the cut-off. (3) إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ ٱلْأَبْتَرُ ۝٣

'Thy loather': (*shāni'aka*): the one who hates you; the one who called the Prophet *abtar*. He is the person who is cut off, from goodness and beneficence, and is too low to mention, not the Prophet. This surah, despite its brevity, is one of the miracles of the Prophet, and a proof of the miraculous nature of the sacred Qur'an [in that today the descendents of the Prophet number in tens of millions].

Surah al-Kāfirūn (109) سورة الكافرون
'The Disbelievers'

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *al-kāfirūn*, meaning the disbelievers. As to whether the surah is Makkan or Madinan there are differing views. In any case, it deals with matters of faith. As Surah al-Kawthar concluded on the theme of the hater of the Prophet, so this surah speaks of the divergences between him and them, such that he would not follow them on their path, and they would not follow him on his path, due to their disbelief and obstinacy.

It is narrated that a group of Quraysh said to the Prophet, 'Come, Muhammad, let us worship what you worship and you worship what we worship, so that we will be partners in a single affair. So if the path we are on is the truth you will get good fortune from it, and if what you are on is the truth we will take good fortune from it.' So the surah was sent down.

In a narration from Imām al-Ṣādiq, they said to the Messenger of Allah, 'You worship our gods for a year and we will worship your god, and you worship our gods for a year and we will worship your god for a year'; and so the surah came down like they had said, with similar repetitions.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

A beginning ***By the name of Allah,*** that it become a maxim for he who begins by it, and assist him in the important matters of his life.

The Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows His particular mercy upon whom He wills of His servants, while His general mercy embraces all things.

Say: O ye the disbelievers! (1) قُلۡ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡكَٰفِرُونَ ۝١

Say, O Messenger: O disbelievers, meaning the disbelievers who occasioned the revelation, though the intention is to include every obstinate disbeliever who does not budge from his disbelief and inordinacy.

I worship not what ye worship (2) لَآ أَعۡبُدُ مَا تَعۡبُدُونَ ۝٢

They worshipped idols and images. The meaning is that the Prophet was not worshipping what they were worshipping.

And ye are not worshippers of what I worship, (3)

وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَـٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ ۝٣

They were not worshipping what the Prophet worshipped, for they were obstinate and arrogant towards the truth. The verse summarises their position, for they were commanded to worship Allah both in the revealed law and by reason.

And I am not a worshipper of what ye worship, (4)

وَلَآ أَنَا۠ عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ ۝٤

The meaning is that the Prophet would never worship what they were worshipping.

And ye are not worshippers of what I worship. (5)

وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَـٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ ۝٥

They will not in the future worship He whom the Prophet worshipped. These two portents have been interpreted as future-tense on account of their being noun-based phrases, which denotes constancy and continuity. The first is a verb-based phrase which at face-value indicates the present. The second was added to the first on account of the surah's flow.

Yours is your religion, and mine is my religion. (6)

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِىَ دِينِ ۝٦

You disbelievers have your way, so follow it until you see its evil consequences.

Surah al-Naṣr (110)
‘The Succour’

سورة النصر

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *al-naṣr*, meaning ‘succour’ or ‘aid that is instrumental in gaining victory’. Like the other Madinan surahs it explains the victory of the Islamic order and government. As Surah al-Kafirun concluded by mentioning the religion, this surah speaks about the diffusion of the religion.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** who is the First before existence, so His name is begun with at the beginning of everything.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows His particular and general mercy upon the believers, who begin things in His name and believe in Him.

This surah was descended after the Prophet's farewell Hajj pilgrimage *(hajjat al-wadā^c^),* year 10 AH when the tribes entered into the religion group after group and the authority of Islam extended throughout the peninsula. As it was revealed the Prophet of Allah said, ‘I announce my death.’ It is said this was on account of how the surah sums up all the Prophet's endeavours.

When came Allah’s succour and the conquest, (1)

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْفَتْحُ ﴿١﴾

The succour of Allah came to the assistance of His religion over the other religions, and of the Muslims over the disbelievers. By the conquest is meant the conquest of Makkah, year 8 AH for then the capital city of idolatry and polytheism in the peninsular was overcome, and its conquest subdued the peninsula.

And thou saw humankind entering into the religion of Allah in troops - (2)

وَرَأَيْتَ ٱلنَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿٢﴾

The tribes and other people all come forward to enter the religion of Islam in troops (*afwājan*); that is, in groups upon groups.

فَسَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ وَٱسۡتَغۡفِرۡهُۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ تَوَّابَۢا ﴿٣﴾

So glorify the praise of thy Lord and seek His forgiveness, indeed He is relenting. (3)

That is, declare Him above all imperfection, by praising Him, in thanks for His granting succour and victory. And seek His forgiveness, to subdue the soul, so that it does not rise above its station and attribute the victory to its own efforts. The Prophet was above these faults, and yet he is so instructed as a lesson for others. Moreover, as has been explained earlier, when some of those necessary actions that are neither obligatory nor desirable but merely permitted, are seen by those who are devotees and intimate with Allah, as removing them from the Divine nearness, and so it is necessary for them to seek forgiveness.

... He is relenting. : However much the servant sins and then redirects himself towards Allah, Allah turns back towards him.

Surah al-Masad (111)
'The Palm-Fibre'

سورة المسد

The surah derives its name from its containing the word *masad*, meaning '(coarse) palm-fibre', and for the same reason it is also called Abi Lahab. Like the other Makkan surahs it is concerned with matters of faith. Whereas the previous surah spoke of the victory of Allah bestowed upon His Prophet, this surah speaks of how He, glory be to Him, suffices the Prophet against his enemies.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … A beginning in the name of Allah who comprises all the attributes of perfection.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows grace and mercy upon the servants.

One of the people who persecuted the Prophet was his uncle Abi Lahab, often hurling stones at him. His wife, called Umm Jumayl, would carry thorns and suchlike during the night and spread them on the Prophet's path, so that when he left his house the thorns would prick his blessed feet. And so this surah was revealed.

Perish the hands of Abi Lahab, and perish he, (1)

تَبَّتۡ يَدَآ أَبِي لَهَبٖ وَتَبَّ ١

The verse speaks of his hands on account of the sins he committed being committed with his hands. The second 'perish' is for emphasis it is in reference to Abi Lahab himself, meaning may his hands perish, and may he perish.

His wealth and what he has earned will enrich him not, (2)

مَآ أَغۡنَىٰ عَنۡهُ مَالُهُۥ وَمَا كَسَبَ ٢

He will find no assistance in fending off the chastisement from his wealth and the deeds he has performed, namely his disbelief, sinning and persecuting the Prophet.

He shall enter in a fire of flames, (3)

سَيَصۡلَىٰ نَارٗا ذَاتَ لَهَبٖ ٣

In the hereafter, he shall enter the fire and remain there permanently, a fire that is raging and flaming. Appropriate for one called 'Father of flame' (*abi lahab*) on account of how his cheeks would flare up with the redness of his lustre.

And his wife, the bearer of firewood, (4) وَٱمۡرَأَتُهُۥ حَمَّالَةَ ٱلۡحَطَبِ ٤

That is, and may his wife perish, meaning she who carries firewood. She earned this title on account of her carrying the thorns, that are normally used for firewood and kindling.

On her neck a rope of palm-fibre. (5) فِي جِيدِهَا حَبۡلٞ مِّن مَّسَدِۭ ٥

That is, on the neck of his wife, Umm Jumayl, who was the sister of the infamous Abu Sufyan. It seems she will tie the thorns in a bundle with a rope and attach the rope to her neck.

Surah al-Ikhlāṣ (112)
'The Purity'

سورة الإخلاص

This surah was named and is called al-Tawḥīd, meaning to posit oneness, and is also named al-Ikhlāṣ, meaning to purify or cleanse, for it negates the idea of God having a partner or an associate. It is called al-Tawḥīd as it contains a reference to the Divine oneness, in the words '...Allah, One.' There are differing views as to whether the surah sent down at Makkah or at Madinah. In either case it is composed of matters of faith. Whereas the previous surah was related to the Prophet (*al-rasūl*), this surah is related to Him who sent him (*al-mursal*).

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah … Beginning by the name of the Allah whose is whatsoever is in the skies and the earth. He is the One, of all existence singular in Divinity.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows mercy and grace upon the servants.

It is recorded that Jews came to the Prophet of Allah and asked him to explain his Lord's attributes. So Allah, glory be to Him, sent this surah.

Say: He is Allah, One, (1)

قُلۡ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝١

Say, O Messenger, that your Lord, whom you call on, is One, having no partner and no division into parts.

Allah the Overlord; (2)

ٱللَّهُ ٱلصَّمَدُ ۝٢

'Overlord' is given for *ṣamad*, meaning the ultimate chief or lord whose authority is such that no affair can take place without his permission. The meaning of the verse is that He is the Absolute Lord in whose hand are all things, so that nothing can take place in the world of being without His permission and without it being part of His affair.

He fathers not, and was born not, (3)

لَمۡ يَلِدۡ وَلَمۡ يُولَدۡ ۝٣

He has not fathered anyone; the angels are not His daughters, as the disbelieving Arabs imagined, nor are the Messiah (Jesus), ᶜUzayr, the Jews and the Christians His sons, as imagined by the Book-folk. Nor was He Himself born of any father or mother.

And there is not a one His equal. (4) وَلَمۡ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدُۢ ﴿٤﴾

No one is like Him, similar to Him or equal to Him. He is the Unique, who has none to parallel Him and none comparable to Him.

Surah al-Falaq (113)
'The Daybreak'

سورة الفلق

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *falaq*, meaning 'daybreak'. The surah is Madinan, even though it deals with affairs concerning a person when he runs into something abhorrent (*makrūh*). As the surah al-Ikhlās declared the One God, this surah is a seeking of His protection.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah,*** who comprises all the attributes of perfection.

… the Compassionate, the Merciful, who bestows from His mercy and grace upon the whole creation, right from the beginning and throughout their lives, and by bringing perfection to their needs and shortcomings.

Say: I shelter with the Lord of the daybreak, (1)

قُلۡ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلۡفَلَقِ ١

That is, I seek immunity and protection. Daybreak is given for *falaq*, whose original meaning is to split, for by the dawn the darkness is broken up and withdraws.

From the evil of that He created, (2)

مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ٢

That is, from the evil of everything Allah has created, glory be to Him, in the sense of tribulations, whether they be human, jinn, animal or inanimate, like floods and storms.

And from the evil of darkness when it falls, (3)

وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ ٣

That is, from the evil of the night, for it is at night that many of the evils befall a person, when the eye is sleeping and darkness reigns.

And from the evil of the bloweresses on knots, (4)

وَمِن شَرِّ ٱلنَّفَّٰثَٰتِ فِي ٱلۡعُقَدِ ٤

'Bloweresses' is given for *naffāthāt*, which is feminine plural. The evil is that of women who use black magic to blow on a thing by which their magic is

covenanted. Knots (ᶜ*uqad*) are mentioned as the witch knots a cord with the intention of blocking someone’s good fortune, or to separate someone from his wife; the witch then blow on these knots as part of her magic and rites. And magic has a real effect, as is shown in psychology *(ᶜilm al-nafs*), and reinforced by experience.

And from the evil of an envier when he envies. (5)

وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

For when a person envies another his envy drives him to harm him with his tongue or hand. And perhaps the meaning of 'when he envies' is when his envy becomes apparent and he acts according to its dictates.

Surah al-Nās (114)
‘Humankind’

سورة الناس

This surah is given its name due to the prominence within it of the word *al-nās*, meaning ‘humankind’. It was sent down at Madinah, and deals with matters related to the person. It is similar to the previous surah in its theme of encouraging man to seek the Divine protection from categories of evil.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Beginning ***by the name of Allah*** that is the symbol of that essence that comprises all the qualities of perfection, and is there then one more worthy of beginning by his name than Him?

… the Compassionate, the Merciful who sends His mercy and grace upon the people, for His mercy has encompassed everything.

Say: I shelter with the Lord of humankind, (1)

قُلۡ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ ١

That is, say, O Messenger, I shelter myself from evil with the Lord of mankind, their Creator and He who raises them and elevates them.

The King of humankind, (2)

مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ ٢

He is their unconditional and absolute Owner; there is no king other than Him, for other kings are only kings in appearance, their kingships have no reality and are but nominal.

The God of humankind, (3)

إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ ٣

The idols are not gods as supposed by the disbelievers. He is Lord, King and God; He raises and elevates mankind, He is their Lord and Master, Owner of their very souls, and the object of their worship other than Whom worship has no object, glory be to Him.

From the evil of the vanishing whisperer, (4)

مِن شَرِّ ٱلۡوَسۡوَاسِ ٱلۡخَنَّاسِ ٤

That is, I shelter myself from the evil of things whispered to man, so as to bring him to disbelief and disobedience. For whenever a person or a devil wishes to entice someone he speaks into his ear in a low voice, so as to misguide him and introduce him to disobedience. 'Vanishing' is given for *khannās*, meaning to hide oneself, to disappear; for whoever wishes to deviate people stays as much as possible unseen. In the case of a devil all is clear; but as for a human, whenever he wishes to deviate a person he conceals himself so that none will see him and frustrate his whisperings, so that his plans are not made clear for people, and they will not disassociate themselves from him and reject him.

Who whispers into the breasts of humankind, (5) ٱلَّذِى يُوَسۡوِسُ فِى صُدُورِ ٱلنَّاسِ ٥

As for the devils all is clear, for they whisper into the heart, and the heart is in the breast, or chest. The whispering of persons into another's breast is on account of their introducing their ideas into the heart, through the ear, and the heart is in the breast.

Of the jinn and humankind. (6) مِنَ ٱلۡجِنَّةِ وَٱلنَّاسِ ٦

That is, from the whisperer who is either of the species of the jinn – the devils who are a party of the jinn – or is of the human species.

May Allah protect us from the evil of every evil by Muhammad and his pure family. May Allah bless Muhammad and his pure, impeccable family. Amen